

**b**ORIS **a**SAF'EV  
**AND THE S**OVIET  
**m**USICology

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Musiikkitiede  
13.9.2005**

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## INTRODUCTION

Boris Vladimirovič Asaf'ev<sup>1</sup> (1884–1949) was one of the most famous musicologists, a prolific composer in the Soviet Union<sup>2</sup> and the most well known Soviet musicologist in the West.<sup>3</sup> His writings on music theory and on music history have been influential in Russian musical life up to this day<sup>4</sup>. Some of the early Russian musical scholars, composers, musicians and cultural critics got a permanent voice in Russian cultural history and in current Russian musicology within his works.

Within exploring his early writings and aesthetical preferences one cannot wholly understand why he was chosen to be an official author of musical life in the Soviet Russia, the first and only musicologist elected as a member of the Academy of Sciences of the USSR. While a propagandist of the modernist works and a founder of *Kružok novoj muzyki* (The Circle of New Music) he was silent when his friends, composers Sergej Prokof'ev (1891–1953) and Nikolaj Mjaskovski (1881–1950) were prosecuted of formalism during Stalin period. Despite Asaf'ev's contradictory views he gained an officially approved status as the “father of Soviet musicology”.

In general, this research attempts to view Asaf'ev's disputed reputation and status in Soviet musicology. The purpose is to examine the aesthetic-philosophical roots of Asaf'ev's fundamental ideas and concepts, and to specify the authors who have influenced him in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. His youthful writings and biographical facts are under evaluation, and to certain extent, mirrored against the ideological and philosophical tendencies of the time, but the main focus of the study is in the analysis of

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<sup>1</sup> See the “Note on Tranliteration” on p. 113.

<sup>2</sup> See for example a biography by Orlova & Krjukov: *Akademik Boris Vladimirovič Asaf'ev* 1984, pp. 264–265: Orlova and Krjukov speculate Asaf'ev's heritage in the Soviet musicology. The book is from now on marked as Biography 1984. (See the list “Note on Abbreviations of Quoted Material”.)

<sup>3</sup> Some of his works are translated in English *Russian music from the beginning of the nineteenth century*, transl. Alfred J. Swan. Ann Arbor: J. W. Edwards, 1953; *A Book About Stravinsky*, trans. Richard F. French. Ann Arbor: UMI Research Press, 1982; and James R. Tull, “B. V. Asaf'ev's *Musical Form as a Process*: Translation and Commentary”. Ph.D. diss., The Ohio State University, 1977. “The Great Russian Composer” in *Russian Symphony: Thoughts about Tchaikovsky*. New York: Philosophical Library, 1947.

<sup>4</sup> A book *Klassičeskaja muzykal'naja forma* (Ruč'evskaja, E. A., 1998.), used by the St. Petersburg Conservatory, is partly based on the writings by Asaf'ev. He has also been cited in concert programs. See for example a concert brochure of Sankt-Peterburgskaja akademičeskaja filarmonija imeni D. D. Šostakoviča, Bol'soj zal. (14.4.2004).

the aesthetical and musico-theoretical terminology used by Asaf'ev which found its final formulation in his main book *Intonation* (1947). One of the main goals of this research is to find out the influence of Russian modernists on Asaf'ev's concepts, later contradicted by his Marxist formulations, by the aesthetic vision which became formulated into socialist realism. Briefly, I see the relationship between different texts fragmentary and twisted. By comparing modernists' texts to those of Asaf'ev I wish to bring some new insights in understanding of Asaf'ev's character, his texts and Soviet musicology.

I am initiating here also some of the ideas that I am interested to study in the future: to examine what features in his life or writings led to his becoming the official voice in the Soviet musical field. The basic hypothesis of my study in the large perspective is that his concepts as well as his main theory of "Intonation" were easy to adapt to almost any ideological system. Although from some point of his career the prevailing Marxist-Leninist-Stalinist context started to shape the nature of his theories, his ambiguous language makes it possible to interpret his ultimate goals and meanings in several ways. I also want to find out how Boris Asaf'ev is viewed in the Western and in the Soviet musical literature, and how his position has changed after the collapse of the Soviet Union. Therefore, one of the goals of the present study is to view critically both the Soviet and the Western sources, and to try to determine the basics of the problems related to their objectivity.

### **1.1 About the Method of the Work**

I was told once in Russia that the general problem of the Western scholars is, that they want to find exhaustive answers and causes to the phenomenon of Russian culture and that they just don't understand that in many cases it is simply impossible. Hilary Fink writes in her book *Bergson and Russian Modernism 1900-1930* (1999) how in the case of modernist texts and Bergsonian philosophy<sup>5</sup> she is not so interested in influence as an agency of causality (which is in her case the task of proving that Bergson caused

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<sup>5</sup> Henry Bergson (1859–1941), a French philosopher.

particular writer to create in a “Bergsonian” way). Moreover she is interested in considering the intertextuality of modernism, of how Russian modernist works may be viewed through a Bergsonian prism, thus broadening our understanding of the period while suggesting new pathways for interpretation and further research. She uses the word intertextualism as a term that has recently been defined as “working out from the broad definition of influence to encompass unconscious, socially prompted types of text formation; modes of conception; styles” and thus Fink emphasizes, “it is not the causal school of influence studies, but rather attention is focused on parallels and occasional differences between works of Russian modernism and the philosophy of Bergson”.<sup>6</sup> Another important notion that I have tried to keep in mind and which is especially important when exploring the Soviet culture is by Timo Suni: “If one notes that the formalist thoughts are based on dialectics, it doesn’t mean that they follow the Hegelian or Marxist thought which are certainly an inseparable part Russian culture and the world of ideas of the time. Moreover, the same kind of characteristics can be found from for example Darwin or Nietzsche, who are simply just not expressed as dialecticians quite often.”<sup>7</sup>

The idea in my analysis works almost the same as Fink’s idea. In my case it is mostly invoked by a very important notion by Elena M. Orlova: “Asaf’ev took only some parts of different philosophies and he was generally interested only in single thesis”<sup>8</sup>. As a result I attempt to view the works of Boris Asaf’ev through different prisms. The task is not easy because modernist texts in general were not one totality, but a set of diverse texts in evolution. Secondly, as Fink emphasizes, the parallels are important and not necessary the causality.<sup>9</sup> Causality can actually sometimes even mislead the interpreter in order to understand the correct meaning.

A practical problem related to the material of this study is the lack of proper footnotes which makes it difficult to trace the origins of Asaf’ev’s expressions. Asaf’ev did use some footnotes and references sometimes, but not systematically. Moreover as David

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<sup>6</sup> Fink 1999, p. xiv.

<sup>7</sup> Pesonen & Suni 2001, p. 15.

<sup>8</sup> Orlova in Asaf’ev: *Simf.E* 1970, p. 6.

<sup>9</sup> Fink 1999, p. xiv.

Haas has noted: he used “shaky analogies, spontaneous neologisms, waves of metaphor, etc...” I consider that the works of Asaf’ev fall in that matter also to the artistic category. For that are several reasons, which will be discussed in more detail later in the Chapter 4.1.1. However, one very important reason which needs to be mentioned already is that although Asaf’ev was a musicologist and a scientist, he was also an artist. He composed music and functioned as a musician. Several artists wrote scientific texts at the time. It was part of creating the new revolutionary culture. Many modernist texts of the Revolutionary period had both, scientific and artistic goals. This shaped the style of language used in scholarly circles.

As we know, it is almost impossible to trace who said something first. Eventually that will lead us to the beginning of our times. That will maybe deepen our understanding of history, but it is not necessarily essential in order to understand the purpose and the ultimate meaning which the author had in mind. My purpose is not to search for exhaustive answers of Asaf’ev’s philosophical roots, which like I mentioned, are most likely unreachable in his case. Rather I am presenting some parallels between the modernist texts and the texts of Asaf’ev, and creating some kind of a dialect between them. (That means that I want to imply to different directions.) By so doing I try to expose Asaf’ev as a typical representative of his era.

## **1.2 About the Content of the Work**

Chapter Two concentrates on the general atmosphere of Russian artistic field, on the concept of Russian modernism and on the development of socialist realism in music. I consider those head titles the most general and neutral in order to portray the context of the life and the works of Boris Asaf’ev. At the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century Russian artistic society was rich and diversified. One could say that Asaf’ev’s ideas were in many ways products of many different modernist trends. His literary production reflects interestingly the development of socialist realist theory in music. The purpose of this chapter is to give the reader background information about the Russian ideological and philosophical tendencies in the beginning of the 20th century, and about the

development of official aesthetics (socialist realism) in music. The modernist movements are introduced at first shortly. The mid part is focused on defining the concept of socialist realism in general, and the final part presents what happened in the field of music on the way to the socialist realism. Although the head title of the present study is not directly concerned with socialist realism in music, it is certainly one of its important side products and questions that cannot be avoided. The Chapters on socialist realism in music are included mainly because in the controversial process of the formation of the Soviet aesthetics Boris Asaf'ev had a special place as one of its formulators in musical field. Better understanding of the extent of the concept of socialist realism depends the understanding of the context where Asaf'ev created his theories and writings on music. Whereas the Chapter Two tries to think over the general problems related to the question of socialist realism in music and thus trying to deepen the understanding of the context of the theories of Boris Asaf'ev, the Chapters on Asaf'ev in one aspect try to function as an example of what socialist realism meant in practise. Thus socialist realism is tried to expose as a large, manysided and controversial cultural phenomenon, and not just as a narrow theory or a Party policy. Yet, it needs to be mentioned that my focus is mostly on music. Socialist realism had different appearance in different areas of art. My overview does not seek to be exhaustive but rather illuminative.

Chapter Three is dedicated to the life of Boris Asaf'ev and to his position in the Soviet musicology. The Soviet musicology will be touched upon briefly as a demonstration of Asaf'ev's major influence on it. Unfortunately, there is only a limited amount of reliable information about Asaf'ev's life since a critical biography has not yet been written. It would be an important task for the future investigations. Soviet biographical sources focus on Asaf'ev's life naturally from the point of view of the formation of socialist realist aesthetics. They emphasize his socialist development and criticize the subjective and idealistic ideas and the unclear literary style of his early texts.<sup>10</sup> The Soviet "official biographer" of Asaf'ev, Elena M. Orlova (1908–1985), has written that Asaf'ev had a

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<sup>10</sup> See for example Pavlova-Arbenina in Asaf'ev: *Ob Opere* 1976, 10–12; *Biography* 1984, pp. 77–78. All the quoted books by Asaf'ev in this work are marked according to the list "Note on Abbreviations of Quoted Material".

“leftist”<sup>11</sup> mark on his works when he was formulating his musical aesthetics in a style of literature statements. However, Futurist stamp is somewhat difficult to apply on Asaf’ev. He was never against Russian tradition and classical culture, even though he was to some extent against traditional conservatory training and thus academicians. I see that he was closest to Futurists and Formalists within his semiotic approach.

Orlova’s writings reflect interestingly the intellectual contradiction that took place in the Soviet Union. She has listed all the “decadent” philosophers in detail who affected Asaf’ev and criticizes the false idealist trait the “careless idealistic position” and “the chaotic idealistic view”<sup>12</sup> that appear in Asaf’ev’s early works.<sup>13</sup> As a result, Orlova tries to convince her readers that Asaf’ev was moving consistently towards the socialist realist aesthetic theory which was crystallized in his main work *Intonation*.

Despite her criticism, Orlova defended Asaf’ev’s actions to Soviet audience.<sup>14</sup> She emphasized for example that Asaf’ev was provably against plain aestheticism – art for art’s sake – ‘formalist aesthetics’ that was unaccepted in the Soviet Union.<sup>15</sup> Yet, she tried to moderate Asaf’ev’s “subjective-idealist” formulations influenced by different idealist philosophers: “However, one can not say that all of his essentials are of that

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<sup>11</sup> By this Orlova as well as other Soviet critics usually refers to the ultra-modernist artists or Lef, i.e. Futurist organization The Left Front of Arts. During the revolution artistic field could be said to have been divided into three main blocs: The Right – Academicians (the official art during the Tsarist regime), Realists, The Centre – “Mir Iskusstvnikii” [The World of Art Group] and Left – Proletkul’t, Futurists etc. who were against the two aforementioned. (Krusanov 2003, p. 7.)

<sup>12</sup> Biography 1984, p. 84.

<sup>13</sup> Orlova writes: “But when reading *Symphonic Etudes* one must not forget that Asaf’ev, like many others of his generation, was in those years far from knowing the theory of dialectical-materialism – the main approach in the development of Russian philosophical thought on the 20<sup>th</sup> century, which enriched itself on that time with such kind of classical works as *Materialism and empirical criticism of V. I. Lenin*. As it is well known, till the end of the 1920s the classical Marxist-Leninist works were not in Asaf’ev’s sight.” Right up to 1918 the fundamental idealistic press organ “Voprosy filosofii i psihologii” continued publishing, three numbers of writings of ‘bourgeois’ philosophers E. Radlovyj and N. Losskij. Their articles were released in 1921 in Petrograd in the journal called *Mysli*. (Orlova in Asaf’ev: *Simf.E* 1970, p. 6. Orlova’s notion is made by A. I. Novikov, the author of the book *Leninizm i progressivnye tradicii obščestvennoj mysli*.)

<sup>14</sup> For example, she noted, that the outline of the problems discussed on the pages of the intended symbolist journal *Muzykal’naja mysl’* were always related to Russian music: “We understand music not as a particular art, closed within itself, but as an effective living principle...our task is postulation and elaboration of musical principles or ‘musical’ regardless of its presence in the sphere of that or another sphere of art, but mainly of course in music.” (A letter of Asaf’ev and Suvčinskij to V. N. Bugaev [Andrej Belyj]; quoted in Biography, 1984 pp. 83–84.)

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., p. 84. Boris Asaf’ev wrote in his letter to Evgenij Basil’evič Bokoslovskij: “It is essential to explain the role of clear aestheticism and admit its insignificant meaning for art as ‘reformative creation’. As far as I know, you are not a defender of aestheticism.”

origin; Asaf'ev took only some parts of different philosophies and he was generally interested only in single thesis."<sup>16</sup> This is true although it doesn't reduce the fact, that Asaf'ev was a modernist or a "formalist" in Soviet terms. Asaf'ev more or less implicated different theories and views and made synthesis so that one cannot trace one author or theory that had more power over him than another. His original philosophical influences are well hidden in his later production. That was maybe one of the reasons to why he had the position he did in the Soviet musicological field. However, what is the difference whether Asaf'ev quoted modernists' texts literally or not; the core of his thought was nevertheless created in their philosophical sphere. Orlova's words raise thoughts that in 1970s Asaf'ev most evidently belonged to those generally accepted figures, even whose youth straying could be neutralized and forgiven. Frankly speaking it was necessary to do so in order to portray the heroic history of loyal communists and explain logically the adoption of past achievements into present use.

The biographical material used here could be divided into three parts: 1. Asaf'ev's personal reminiscences and letters which are published in special collections during the Soviet era; 2. the biography by Orlova & Krjukov and its side material: memoirs by contemporaries and article collections edited by the same authors and 3. Western sources,<sup>17</sup> as for example the biography by Richard Tull (1976). Since Western sources lack the Marxist-Leninist propaganda, they tend to be more critical. The seeming advantage of Western scholars that they have been more independent of the ideological burden than Soviet scholars, has often led to a polarization. The culmination of such polarization may be found in the study of Šostakovič<sup>18</sup>. Nevertheless, the factual side of the Western articles written on Asaf'ev derives from the Soviet sources. Therefore, they do not offer more reliable biographical information despite interesting interpretations. Thus, the biography given here offers only approximate information.

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<sup>16</sup> Orlova in Asaf'ev: *Simf.E* 1970, p. 6.

<sup>17</sup> Available Western sources about Boris Asaf'ev are to be found for example from Schwarz [1972] 1983; Tull 1979; McQuere 1983; Young 1998, Haas 1992, 1998; Taruskin, 1997.

<sup>18</sup> The latest book on the subject is by Brown, Malcom Hamrick (eds.) *A Shostakovich Case Book*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, cop. 2004. The most famous debate has been between Laurel E. Fay and Solomon Volkov, which has continued since 1980s.

The Chapter Four and Chapter Five focuses on Asaf'ev's most essential works in chronological order and his philosophical and aesthetical concepts. I try to expose the development of his literary production and along with it, the development of his aesthetical terminology and philosophical concepts. Asaf'ev's aesthetical concepts have been studied mostly in the former Soviet states. Important articles on the development of his aesthetic theory can be found in Dmitrij Kabalevskij (1952), (1954); Lev Mazel (1957); Arnol'd N. Sohor (1961); Jaroslav Jinárek (1967), (1972); N. G. Šahnazarova (1966); Vladimir Zak (1982) and Elena Orlova (1964), (1984); and in the West in Richard Tull (1977); Gordon MacQuere (1983) and in David Haas (1992), (1998).

The background of this study consists of musicological studies at the University of Helsinki (1999–) and Russian and Eastern European Studies in Renvall Institute and in Aleksanteri Institute in Helsinki. I spent a fruitful exchange student year (2003–2004) in St. Petersburg studying at the Philological Faculty of the St. Petersburg State University and living as an exchange daughter in an extraordinary kind and cultured Russian family. On the same semester I visited the archive called RGALI, or “ Russian State Archive of Literature and Art” in Moscow, then in “The Musical Archives named after Glinka” in Moscow, as well as in “The Institute of Arts and History” in St. Petersburg and consulted some Russian specialists on the matter. All translations in this work are translated by me if not other vice mentioned<sup>19</sup>.

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<sup>19</sup> The Note on Transliteration reminds on back.

## 2. THE IDEOLOGICAL AND PHILOSOPHICAL TENDENCIES IN RUSSIAN ARTISTIC SOCIETY AT THE BEGINNING OF THE 20<sup>th</sup> CENTURY

### 2.1 Russian Modernists

Russian modernism is a general title for a variety of artistic groups. The modernistic era in Russian cultural history began in 1890 as an antithesis for realism. However, the realist tradition did not dry out but it continued and developed side by side with Russian modernism having its renaissance within the socialist realism.

The early representatives of Russian modernism were Symbolists who considered art as independent, free and individual containing an absolute value. Whereas the Realist tradition offered a worldview of natural sciences that was holistic, the Symbolist worldview was spiritual and pluralistic.<sup>20</sup> Generally speaking the Symbolist movement had their ideals in the Romantic period: the view of art almost as a religion, revealing life's secrets "through the meditation of the poet-priests" and the attempt to unite poetry and music: to revive the 'Word' were the legacy of the Romantics.<sup>21</sup>

Russian Symbolism can be divided into two generations although somewhat artificially. The first generation that is often nowadays called "Decadents"<sup>22</sup> took their influences mainly from the French Symbolism. As Ada Steinberg has stated, the French Symbolism, although strongly influenced by Arthur Schopenhauer (1788–1850), Johann Gottlieb Fichte (1762–1814) and Friedrich Nietzsche (1844–1900), differed from the German Romantics and Russian Symbolists in that they had lost their faith in God<sup>23</sup>. Russian Symbolists were deeply religious and spiritual. The first generation included poets such as Konstantin Bal'mont (1867–1942), Valerij Brjusov (1873–1924), Zinaida Hippus (1869–1945) and Dmitrij Merežkovskij (1866–1941).

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<sup>20</sup> Pesonen & Suni 2001, p. 9.

<sup>21</sup> Steinberg 1982, pp. 18–19.

<sup>22</sup> Here, the most radical symbolists are considered as decadents, because they wanted to make a total rejection from the old realist and utilitarian ideals. However, 'Decadence' is disputed concept and it has many connotations. It shouldn't be confused totally with the first generation of Symbolists. Rather it is a branch of Symbolism.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

The younger generation, Aleksander Blok (1880–1921), Vjačeslav Ivanov (1866–1949) and Andrej Belyj (1880–1934) were mostly inclined to German Romantics and idealist philosophy. Their generation is often called “mystic Symbolists” because they had strong interest to religion and Vladimir Solov’jev’s (1853–1900) mystical doctrines. However, the second generation did not break its ties either with French Symbolist poetry, painting or music. For example Belyj was very interested in Stéphane Mallarmé’s (1842–1898) ideas on the musicalization of poetry<sup>24</sup>.

Characterizing the two generation Simon Morrison has written that according to the first generation of Symbolists, symbols stimulated the imagination, “invoking ancient times, recalling forgotten experiences, and, as a consequence, temporarily renouncing reality for dream, cognition for intuition.” For the second generation, “symbols had the capacity to transform reality, to make the familiar unfamiliar (a notion later adopted by the Russian Formalists), and to have a narcotic impact on the psyche.”<sup>25</sup> The idea of transforming the reality made the second generation of Symbolists closer to Realists’ utilitarian purposes. They saw art as a means to influence on reality. Thus “decadence” is somehow a legitimate appellation for the first generation because they didn’t care of the social or political functions of art but wanted to turn their back to the the old ideals.

At the beginning of the 1910s Symbolism was yet divided yet two different branches Acmeism and Futurism, who wanted to clean the Symbolist texts from foreign philosophies, mysticism, aestheticism and individuality. They considered themselves as the topmost avant-gardists wanting to clean the poetry from the unclear thematic elements so that the words would again speak for themselves.<sup>26</sup> Cubo-Futurists developed transrational language where “word as such” was considered a phonetic entity possessing its own ontology. This language was rich in sound and devoid of conventional meaning. It was organized by phonetic analogy and rhythm rather than by grammar and syntax. Typical of the era, it emphasized the reader’s role in the process of grasping the message *intuitively* in a mental process.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> Steinberg 1982, pp. 34–35.

<sup>25</sup> Morrison 2002, p. 4.

<sup>26</sup> Pesonen & Suni 2001, p. 9.

<sup>27</sup> Lawton 1988, p. 13.

Futurism developed in Italy and in Russia almost simultaneously. Russian Pre-Revolutionary Futurist scheme was divided into four groups that had occasional ties with each others: The Cubo-Futurists, Ego-Futurists, The Mezzanine of Poetry and Centrifuge. The Cubo-Futurists differed from their Western counterparts not only in that they had different set of poetic devices but also that their vision of poetic universe had its roots in the Slavophile ideology of the preceding century. Their aesthetics had its roots in irrationalism and its emphasis was on speed, dynamism, and simultaneity that reflected the poetic perception of a chaotic universe.<sup>28</sup> As Lawton has stated, the main difference between the Futurist and Symbolist ideas was that the Futurists didn't perceive chaos in negative terms, as a disruption of order, but as a natural condition. Whereas Symbolists escaped from the chaos to the ideal world beyond everything, Futurists recognized only surrounding world and made new rules that would fit the reality of a chaotic universe. The Ego-Futurists manifested in their *Prologue Ego-Futurism* Italian Futurist Filippo Marinetti's (1876–1944) idea that “the poetry of the past is inadequate to express the spiritual life of a contemporary individual and that technological reality requires a new rhythm in poetry and a new orchestration of sounds.”<sup>29</sup> Futurists devaluated Aleksandr Puškin (1799–1837) and rejected the reason and logic.

Lawton has divided Russian Futurism into two distinct phases: “the first bearing an anarchic-revolutionary character with a tinge of romanticism, typical of the historical avant-garde; and the second marked by an unsuccessful effort to embrace the Revolution and build the culture of the future communist society”<sup>30</sup>. The Post-Revolutionary Futurist scheme was divided into Company 41° and Left Front of the Arts (Lef). The latter competed with other literary groups (Proletkult, The Divide, Imaginists and Constructivists) over the title “the representatives of the true proletarian literature”. However, the Lef had difficulties because it was aesthetics-oriented, Bohemian and it had an antisocial past. Although the Commissar of Education Anatolij Lunačarskij (1875–1933), who was sympathetic toward the avant-garde, supported

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<sup>28</sup> Ibid., pp. 8, 11, 17.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid., pp. 8, 21.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid., pp. 11–12, 21.

them to some degree in 1918–1919, he was forced to withdraw his support from their radical demands for his policy attempted to integrate all cultural groups. Futurist poet Vladimir Majakovskij's (1893–1930) charismatic personality who attracted the public had a crucial part in keeping the Futurist group alive. However, they had to make enormous concessions in order to survive in the Soviet Communist atmosphere. This meant co-option of Puškin, the placement of individual with the society and a transition from theory to practice. Lawton writes that “[t]he absurdity of the dream of a Soviet avant-garde encompassing Communist ideology and Futurist aesthetics finally became clear to the last of the Futurists.” Majakovskij committed a suicide in 1930 as a member of RAPP<sup>31</sup>, the conservative and dogmatic Russian Association of Proletarian Writers.<sup>32</sup>

Timo Suni has stated that Formalists appeared soon after the fraction of Symbolists. This new literary research trend held poetry as an independent and valuable for its own sake, without dependence of the laws of natural sciences and social values. Following the “avant-garde” they considered poetry as an independent language, which in its clearest appearance carries out only a poetic task.<sup>33</sup> Formalism had a profound influence on literary criticism and semiotics in its emphasis on the structural features of the text itself and its insistence that literary study be scientific and autonomous. Formalist studies fruitfully united different areas or science: literary research, language science, folklore, ethnography, modern literature etc. They questioned the traditional means of the literature research and applied generally approved scientific methods that answered the special requirements of the object. Formalists possessed an avant-gardist attitude and they got their first impulses from Futurists and especially theoretical propositions and poetic practice of the Cubo-Futurists whose poetry became an important case study for the Formalist scholars. Their other important sources were Symbolist poetics and structuralist philology. Ferdinand de Saussure's (1857-1913) doctrines reached Russia already in 1910.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> All the most important abbreviations are found from “Abbreviations” on p. 116.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 40–48.

<sup>33</sup> Suni 2001, p. 9.

<sup>34</sup> Eagle 1988, p. 281; Suni 2001, pp. 13–15.

Suni has defined Russian Formalism as a linguistic and semiotic oriented text centered poetics, which views its object (the language and meanings of art) mainly, although not only as an independent artefact. He writes that Formalists view of the literature was at first phonetic, synchronic and reductive. Their picture of the means of art was quite static and mechanistic. However they soon moved from poetry to prose and attained more semantic and stylistic aspect. This change developed their theory formation into more functional and dynamic direction, and soon they adopted also a diachronical aspect. Formalist evolutionary theory emphasized the independency of development and inner dialectics of every artform. According to them art rather realizes and recreates its own laws than “reflects” the surrounding reality or reacts to its changes. The means of art do not necessary change, but their functions i.e., the relations of form and material change constantly. Thus art shows life over and over again and its value is endless.<sup>35</sup> The name “Formalism” was applied to the scholars later because they were seen to undervalue the content of the literature. In reality they rejected the traditional view of the form as an opposite to the content. Formalists consisted of two groups The Moscow Linguistic Circle (1915) and the Petrograd-based Opojaz<sup>36</sup> (1916) (Society for the Study of Poetic Language). The early representatives were Roman Jakobson (1896–1982), Lev Jakubinskij (1892–1945), Viktor Šklovskij (1893–1984), Boris Ejhenbaum (1886–1959), Osip Brik (1888–1945) and Juri Tynjanov (1894–1943).<sup>37</sup> Formalism became a swearword in the Soviet Union. However, most of the acculsations of their critics were groundless and bitter because they formed a threat to the Marxit-Leninist understanding of history. Many of the early critics of Formalism such as Lunačargskij and Lev Trotskij (1879–1940) recognized their technical strength but rejected their worldview.<sup>38</sup>

## 2.2. The Concept of Socialist Realism

The given statements at the Soviet aesthetical literature define socialist realism as ‘a creative method, through which the socialist art and the culture of socialist state is

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<sup>35</sup> Suni 2001, pp. 17–18, 22.

<sup>36</sup> Society of the study of the theory of poetic language, OPOJAZ (Obščestvo izučenija teorii poetičeskogo jazyka. See <<http://www.opojaz.ru>>.

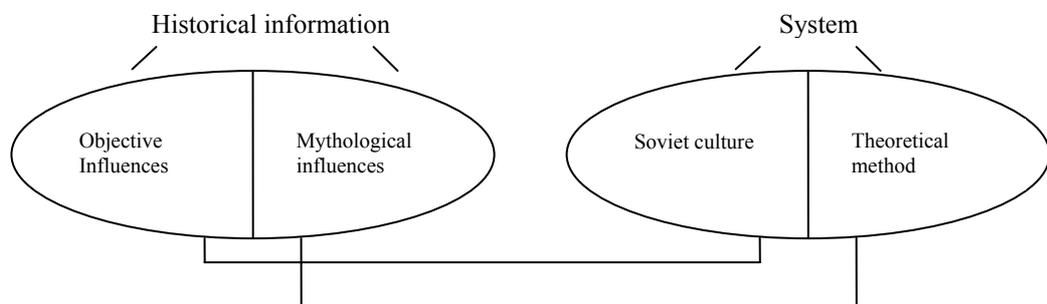
<sup>37</sup> Ibid., p. 8; Eagle 1988, pp. 281–282.

<sup>38</sup> Suni 2001, pp. 19–20.

produced’, or as ‘the socialist art that is based on the Marxist-Leninist aesthetics and philosophy’.<sup>39</sup> However, the modern understanding of the concept is much wider and complex. Recent studies have not anymore limited themselves in understanding Soviet aesthetics as a strictly political historical phenomenon i.e., ‘the artistic system that was guided by the party’. Moreover they have concentrated on the own immanent logic of Soviet aesthetics.<sup>40</sup>

I have divided the study on socialist realism into two main approaches (see the Table 1.) through which I attempt to show that socialist realism can be understood from different points of views and on different levels. None of the views listed here are complete or satisfactory without each other. Moreover they are complementary in order to portray the full picture of socialist realism as a large cultural phenomenon.

**Table 1.** **socialist realism**



<sup>39</sup> According to Soviet aesthetic theoretician Avner Zis, the basis of realist method is in the wide sense of the term to portray the object truthfully and realistically; it has to correspond with the life. In the Narrow sense it refers to the 19<sup>th</sup> Century concrete-historical artistic movement and the creative method peculiar to it. (Zis 1976, pp. 206, 212, 265; see also *Marxist-Leninist Aesthetics and Arts* 1980.)

<sup>40</sup> Gutkin has done some account about the studies on socialist realism. An essential scholars that changed the nature of the study were Katerina Clark (1985), Boris Groys (1990) and Regine Robin (1992). (Gutkin 1999, pp. 1–4.)

### 2.2.1 Socialist Realism as a System and Through Historical Formation

The first approach is to view *socialist realism as a system*. This can be understood in two ways: in a narrow sense it is the Soviet ‘aesthetical method’ or ‘aesthetical theory’, in which form it could be seen as a totalitarian codification or a set of rules and prohibitions. In a wide sense, as Evgeni Dobrenko has stated, it is not to be understood only through readings of socialist realist literary canon, since it is not only a layer of texts but it should be seen as a boundless sea of artistic production.<sup>41</sup> Thus in the wide sense the concept reflects the whole Soviet culture in its different modes and the people who functioned in it, but also those who didn’t create the art of given standards.

Another approach is to concentrate on the historical development and shaping of socialist realism. *The historical aspect* concerns the formation of the Soviet aesthetics, i.e. the philosophical and cultural tendencies that influenced on its formation. Here I suggest that the historical or developmental approach could be divided into two categories: 1. the so called ‘objective influences’ and 2. ‘Mythological influences’. This distinction is misleading in the sense that the mythological influences are at the same time objective influences. The term mythological influences refers to those influences that were recognized or accepted in the official Soviet definition of the term, i.e. the so called mythological<sup>42</sup> roots, whereas the concept of the objective influences refers to those that were not but have been recognized from the outside of the socialist realist culture. Thus the objective approach is wider than the mythological aspect and it includes also the latter.

According to the objective approach there was multiple even opposite tendencies that influenced on the formation of socialist realist aesthetics. In order to understand the concept more profound one must explore the general features of the development of Russian culture and foreign tendencies which influenced on it and not just the history of realism and socialism. According to Andrej Rogačevskij for example, many ‘topoi’ of socialist realism were produced already in the literature of the 1860s. He writes that the forerunners in various aspects of socialist realism were not radicals but also the

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<sup>41</sup> Dobrenko 2001, pp. xiv–xv.

<sup>42</sup> Also Levon Hacobian (1998) has used the term mythological referring to the official Soviet texts.

conservative writers.<sup>43</sup> This aspect reveals foremost how ideologically mixed the roots of the socialist realism were.

Another so called objective approach can be found for example in Irina Gutkin who views socialist realism as a product or a compromise of the views of different avant-garde artistic movements of the revolutionary period 1890–1935. She argues:

[f]or all their differences, the Bolsheviks and the successive artistic avant-garde movements shared the ideal of attaining a future ideal society that would rise above material contingency and allow everyone to become a demiurge. It was this shared goal that opened the potential for their competition and/or cooperation [...] the socialist realism as a cultural consciousness emerged as the result of complex mutations and combinations of several combating mythological or belief systems and visionary designs for an ideal society that interacted in the Russian cultural tradition.<sup>44</sup>

The indirect and mythological basis of the so called ‘historical and dialectical method’ of socialist realism is to be found in the contradictory writings of Karl Marx (1818–1883), Friedrich Engels (1820–1895) and Vladimir Lenin (1870–1924). It was demonstrated in Soviet aesthetic books with various examples and interpretations taken from the original texts of Marx, Engels and Lenin. In many cases the original texts were exploited and interpreted illogically and arbitrary, without seeing the context of the writings.<sup>45</sup> As Irina Gutkin has emphasized, many Western scholars have concerned themselves almost exclusively with assessments of Marxist components in Soviet aesthetics.<sup>46</sup> Although this approach is one of important aspects in exploring the socialist realism it is also misleading in the sense that Marx and Engels wrote hardly anything about art. The true formulators were Soviet scholars and artists, such as Maxim Gorkij (1868–1936), Anatolij Lunačarskij, Anton Makarenko (1883–1939), Boris Asaf’ev, various artistic movements, Party members, and as an enhancive power – the Soviet people.<sup>47</sup> Thus, it is good to remember (especially in our context) that Marxism and Soviet communism, and especially Soviet aesthetical theory, were two or

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<sup>43</sup> Rogachevskii 1997, p. 36.

<sup>44</sup> Gutkin 1999, p. 150.

<sup>45</sup> See for example Marx & Engels: *Taiteesta ja Kirjallisuudesta* [On Art and Literature] 1973.

<sup>46</sup> Gutkin 1999, p. 2.

<sup>47</sup> See for example Krutous 1980, p. 321 in *Marxist-Leninist Aesthetics and Arts*; Solomon 1979, p. 5.

even three different things despite their ideological connections. This distinction is important especially when considering the Soviet aesthetical thought in music which was far from being logically traceable from original Marxism. Nevertheless, the social, political, economical and historical aspects of Marx and Engels, and the Hegelian dialectics were applied strongly to Soviet rhetoric and also to Soviet aesthetical literature.<sup>48</sup> Marxism functioned certainly as one of the many ideologies and philosophies that shaped Soviet Russian theory and practice.

In other words, an important source to view socialist realism consists of the statements of the essential Soviet theorists, to read the art critics written in the official Soviet newspapers and to examine the lives of Soviet artists their artworks. In this light one can also view the development of socialist realism through the following presentation of the life and works of Boris Asaf'ev. He is actually a good example of the modern understanding of the nature of the concept: the term contains many contradictory elements. The theory was in constant process and its roots were pluralistic.

To show the many-faced, controversial and in some sense inexhaustible nature of socialist realism as a system and as a result of historical development, I will now look at it through two statements. First statement 'socialist realism as a totalitarian aesthetics' or 'a totalitarian system' will look at socialist realism from the point of view of a ready-made aesthetical codification. It attempts to advance from the narrow view to the wide view. The second statement considers 'socialist realism as an ideology' by Gutkin<sup>49</sup>.

### **2.2.1.1 Socialist Realism as a Totalitarian System**

An important feature of official socialist realist aesthetic method or theory was that it was an evolving entity or as formulated by Juri Barabash: "The principles of Party guidance of art are not at all merely a list of recipes and instructions to be applied to any case [...], for this guidance itself is alive, developing and creative."<sup>50</sup> As a result the

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<sup>48</sup> Because it is not a concern of a present study, it is assumed that the reader possesses the basics.

<sup>49</sup> Gutkin 1999, p. 2.

<sup>50</sup> Barabash 1980, p. 29 in *Marxist-Leninist Aesthetics and Arts*.

authorities and formulators of socialist realism were seen also as progressive and creative and not fundamental. If suddenly a leading theorist would not anymore fit into political picture he or she was replaced. But this is of course typical in all political circles. As it has been stated, in the constant influx state, there was not a single authority that could have been named as a creator of socialist realist language and culture. Rather the theory was created through several years by different authors together with the Soviet people.

The above discussion has been going on within the concept of totalitarianism: was it a conclusive system which subjected everyone and everything under its power, and whether there existed something like pure “socialist realism” in its most strict sense.<sup>51</sup> Did Josif Stalin (1879–1953) have as enormous influence on the existing culture and totalitarian system as people generally think, or was he only an initiator or a tip of an iceberg whereas the system and the people who functioned in it enhanced and strengthened the totalitarian force. Revisionists tend to split the causes of totalitarianism between the government and the citizens. According to them, in order to succeed it was required adaptive participation from citizens, which was confirmed with the compelling and even arbitrary constitutions.<sup>52</sup> The Western revisionists see that in relation to totalitarianism Stalin was an inadequate and in certain sense a causal, outside factor in the scheme.<sup>53</sup>

Gerog Freeze who is a representative of a more autocratic view emphasizes that the totalitarian state was full of unrest, which was perceivable mainly in the official state institutions. The instability of Stalin’s rhetoric reflected the political uncertainty and kept society in constant movement. Yet he enhanced it by executing the fatal politics.<sup>54</sup> According to this view no-one could live in peace under Stalin’s power. This could be seen for example as attempts of the former avant-garde artists to create the art of the given realist and traditional standards although, even that didn’t guarantee the success. The opera “Great friendship” by Vano Muradeli (1908–1970) is a good indication of an

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<sup>51</sup> For example Hannah Ardent belongs to the old totalitarian school with her book *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (1973) and J. Arch Getty represents the revisionists’ view.

<sup>52</sup> Freeze 1997, pp. 293–294.

<sup>53</sup> Ward [1993] 1999, p. 126.

<sup>54</sup> Freeze 1997, pp. 293–294.

artist who tried to follow the correct path but failed<sup>55</sup>. Those kinds of examples were many<sup>56</sup>. Nevertheless, it needs to be remembered that even the most notable and officially approved works of socialist realism contained often double meanings and hidden purposes. That was the case of the many works of Šostakovič. People still like to speculate the real motives and message of his works. This means that the system wasn't total in that sense. However, socialist realism was a unanimous codification or an aesthetic theory of the rulers who attempted to create a totalitarian system and to rule over the whole culture. The system didn't function conclusively as we can note when considering the art products but the laws of its existence followed the totalitarian ideology. The socialist realist cultural system was enhanced by the society that participated in that sense in the totalitarian project.

### 2.2.1.2 Socialist Realism as an Ideology

The second statement is 'socialist realism as an ideology' as Gutkin<sup>57</sup> has stated. This approach is problematic since it doesn't take into account the totalitarian aspect of the concept or see it as a monolithic system which was certainly one of its qualities. I see that socialist realism functioned as an ideology only at a theoretical level and only as one of the goals of the high Stalinist culture. However if one looks at the practice, i.e. socialist realist artworks, the statement becomes complex. Should they be viewed as products of some ideological thinking?

Gutkin<sup>58</sup> writes rightfully that behind the socialist realism there was a set of concepts and views, such as 'utopia about a new society or a new man' which different avant-garde branches shared together. However, I see that the shared views were related to the formation of socialist realist aesthetics but not necessary to the ready made theory in itself because in a ready made concept it reached a totalitarian form, i.e. 'a means to

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<sup>55</sup> See Herrala 2002.

<sup>56</sup> See for example the article by Nicholas Reyland "Engineering the Soul" (2001), which is concentrated in Lutoslawskij's difficulties in Poland, where the musicological sphere was dominated by one of the most famous Polish communist musicologists Sofia Lissa. "[T]hey could never be sure if the music would be condemned or rewarded – however hard they were trying." (Reyland 2001, p. 2.)

<sup>57</sup> Gutkin 1999, p. 2.

<sup>58</sup> See Ibid.

control the society according to the roles of the authority'<sup>59</sup>. It is doubtful that the artists from different fields of art really had any real “systematic body of concepts about culture”<sup>60</sup> or shared ideological values after the year 1932 when socialist realism was declared by the authors as the only truly socialist method for creating art. After unifying all the former artistic associations into one, it was unclear for the artists and mainly for musicians, what the future art would be like, i.e. who would be the artist of tomorrow.

During the Stalinist era the reality was constantly changing. A celebrated artist could be thrown into jail on the following day for breaking the rules of the society with his art. The problem was the arbitrariness and inexplicability of the term or method which was many times impossible to follow. Especially during Andrej Ždanov's (1896–1948) attacks towards the cultural elite the reality and practice became so confused and arbitrary that it is impossible to suppose that the Soviet artist, even the officially awarded artists as Dmitrij Šostakovič (1906–1975) or Prokof'ev were really sharing the socialist realist “ideology” of Stalin and creating their art within its spirit. Moreover it was fear that put people to create according to the method, and not the ideological reasons. Thus socialist realism wasn't an ideology for the reason that not all the people who created socialist realist art believed in the theory/mythology (there was hardly a stable theory, rather there was a stable mythology) or constantly changing Party policy behind it. They were rather forced to follow the “code”.

I have now hopefully explained some of the problems that are related to the socialist realism as a concept. The next sub-Chapter is concerned of a more specific area and discusses what socialist realism meant in music.

### **2.2.2 The Socialist Realism in Music**

Socialist realism in music is good to be viewed also through the presented formula. But the main distinction needs to be made between the theory and practice. The 19<sup>th</sup> century

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<sup>59</sup> Here the totalitarian system is seen complex possessing many authors.

<sup>60</sup> Gutkin has defined socialist realism according the definition of ‘ideology’ given in *Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary*, 9<sup>th</sup> ed. (Ibid.)

became a source also for music. However the musical rhetoric especially the sharp criticism was mainly inherited from the avant-gardist groups of the early 20<sup>th</sup> Century. The mythological literary sources like the texts of Marx and Engels were mainly concentrated on literature and didn't consider music at all. The musicological authorities became mainly Russian classical composers and cultural critics such as Vladimir Stasov (1824–1906) and Aleksander Serov (1820–1871) who represented the Realist tradition and Slavophile attitude. The representatives of the Soviet view such as Boris Asaf'ev held them as exemplars in many ways.

In comparison with literature, musical spheres lacked eminent musical exemplars and yet in 1930 the atmosphere was in many ways very innovative. Different composers competed for the title of the first real Soviet composer, since it was uncertain what would be the particular composition to serve as an example for the future socialist society.<sup>61</sup> However, within few years the focus was shifted into old critical realist tradition and folk music. The experimental avant-garde and modern Western music was promulgated. One of the reasons for the narrow-mindedness was the partial victory of the RAPM's<sup>62</sup> musicians who composed mainly according to the realist standards and supported simple and easily assessable style. The result was fairly confusing and controversial concept, which was partly formed as a result of the aesthetical disputes of different artistic groups and movements as well as according to some individual tastes of the political elite. I will next look at the development in more detail.

The Revolution in 1917 put an end to a so-called Silver Age of Russian culture. In music the Silver Age meant mainly a dualistic atmosphere and the presence of such composers as Romantics Nikolaj Medtner (1180–1951) and Sergej Rahmaninov (1873–1943) who continued the Romantic tradition of Pjotr Čajkovskij (1840–1893), and “musical symbolist” Aleksandr Skrjabin (1872–1915); “musical modernist” Prokof'ev

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<sup>61</sup> Fairlough 2002, pp. 259, 273; see also Haas 1998, pp. 216–217. There was a serious discussion about the future of the Soviet opera in the late 20s. Prokofiev's opera *Love for three oranges* (1926) was performed in Leningrad. Berg's *Wozzeck* (premier in Berlin in 1925) had its performance in 1927. Others were for example Krenek's opera and Schreker's *Der ferne Klang*. Boris Asaf'ev emphasized the meaning of these operas for Soviet music. (Norris 1982, p. 107) Šostakovič's opera *The Nose* was composed between the summers of 1927 and 1928 in Moscow and in Leningrad.

<sup>62</sup> See the “Abbreviations”.

and “neo-nationalist” Igor Stravinskij (1882–1971) who wanted to break the conventional rules of picturesque romantic scenery. At the traditional and academic St. Petersburg Conservatory Prokof’ev and Stravinskij were called as “young savages”. After the Bolševik takeover many artists including previously mentioned (except Skrjabin who died in 1915), moved to the West. Of them only Prokof’ev returned.<sup>63</sup>

### 2.2.2.1 Organizational Formation and the Dispute over the New Aesthetics

The Revolution gave birth to many new artistic formations. One of them was Proletkult (Proletarian Organization of Culture Education) which repeated the Silver-age idea *Žiznetvorčestvo*: the art influences on life. However, the point of importance was no more on the artistic individual but on the artistic society and the idea of changing the reality.<sup>64</sup> The utopian thinking of Proletkult’s was close to Symbolists, Futurists and Communists. The head organizer was Lunačarskij’s brother-in-law Aleksander Bogdanov, whose Nietzschean “God is dead” –philosophy handed God’s creative ability over to a human society towards the idea that society was functioning as a practical philosophy. The goal of Proletkult was to build a new society and to break down the old ties with the bourgeois culture. The members wanted to create totally new kind of art, which would remove the fences between the cultural intelligentsia and the “underdeveloped” mass. As a result they founded experimental studios where they produced new kind of sounds and techniques. In addition, workers were invited to participate in creating art under the guidance of the artists. The most popular form of music was revolution hymns and folk songs for choir to which all could join, as well as technical sounds that related to workers’ own culture. Many famous composers joined to Proletkult. Among those were: Nikolai Roslavec (1881-1944), Leonid Sabaneejev (1881-1968) Reinhold Glière (1874–1956) and Arsenij Avraamov (1886-1944).<sup>65</sup>

Lenin, traditional in his taste, never understood the experimental nature of Proletkult although it was supposed to be a mouthpiece of Revolution. Lenin held art as a

<sup>63</sup> See Maes [1996] 2002, p. 237; Hakobian 1998, p. 16.

<sup>64</sup> Maes [1996] 2002, pp. 240, 256.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid., pp. 237–240; Edmunds 2003, pp. 8–9.

subordinate to politics and didn't want to destroy the ties to the tradition for the reason that it was easily accessible for the masses. His idea was to establish massive institutions that would unite all the public activity. NARKOMPROS (The Peoples Commissariat of Enlightenment) was appointed to conduct all the spiritual-, artistic- and educational activities. All the private publication houses were nationalized and put under the NARKOMPROS. MUZO, the musical section of NARKOMPROS was founded in 1918, and Lenin ordered also Proletkult to join it in 1920 to cut its independency.

Despite all the changes, the Revolution didn't put an end on the flourishing art in Russia. The whole 1920s was dedicated to the search for a new Soviet style. David Haas has called the period 1921–1929 “high modernism”. NEP (The New Economic Policy) (1921) had tolerant attitude towards the artists and invested on art. Musicians had opportunities to hear and to meet foreign artists such as Darius Mihaud (1892–1974), Alban Berg (1885–1935) and Paul Hindemith (1895–1963). A Bolševik intellectual Lunačarskij functioned as a head of NARKOMPROS between the years 1917–1929 and the atmosphere was reasonably free. Nevertheless, despite that Lunačarskij, Blok, Arthur Lourié, Gorgij and Kasimir Malevič (1879–1935) had done many new revolutionary artistic experiments during the War-Communism, the official Soviet art had not yet been born. Nevertheless, during the NEP also the new generation of Soviet musicians was starting their careers. One of them was Dmitrij Šostakovič.<sup>66</sup>

One sign of the prevailing pluralism in music of 1920s was the coexistence of two independent unions of musicians<sup>67</sup>: ASM (1923) (The Association of Contemporary Music) attached to the ISCM (Society of Contemporary Music), and RAPM or VAPM (Russian/All-Union Association of Proletarian Musicians) which was parallel to Proletkult and analogical to RAPP (The Association of Proletarian Writers) and AHRR (The Association of Proletarian Painters). RAPM shared the same motto as Lenin when he declared that art belongs and must be understood by the people (by the victorious proletariat). Following Lenin's motto RAPM was against any form of musical creation apart from the immediate sounding illustration to ideological dogmas. They preferred

<sup>66</sup> See Haas 1998, pp. 2–3; Maes [1996] 2002, pp. 243–245.

<sup>67</sup> For more detailed information about ASM, RAPM, etc. see Abbreviations.

“mass songs” with ideological texts, usually written by poets allied in the homologous organization of proletarian writers. As Neil Edmunds has pointed out, the attacks of RAPM’s musicians towards the musicians of ASM influenced on socialist realist musical rhetoric in many ways. The Soviet swear words ‘formalist’ and ‘leftist’ which had their origins in literature were first used in music by the members of Proletarian groups such as RAPM. They were used to accuse the members of ASM of their Western capitalistic and modern influences.<sup>68</sup> The Party Resolution of 23.4.1932 ordered all the independent artistic organizations to be replaced with centralized “creative unions”, which started to function under the doctrine of socialist realism in 1934. The central musical fractions were Moscow Union of Composers and its branch Leningrad Union of Composers. They were unified in 1948 and renamed into Union of Composers of the USSR.<sup>69</sup>

Many scholars have argued over the matter about which terms should be applied to the culture that preceded the socialist realism and which should be used when determining the culture after launching the term socialist realism. The dispute has concerned especially the French term *avant-garde*, which is generally defined as a vanguard or a new artistic movement. According to Taruskin neither Skrjabin, Prokof’ev, Stravinsky, nor ASM, which supported the performances of Western modern music in Russia, belonged to the *avant-garde*, because their intuition was based on tradition despite the fact that they were advancing it. Taruskin writes that the only true representative of the 20<sup>th</sup> century musical *avant-garde* in Russia was RAPM because it wanted to turn its back to tradition and to create totally new Soviet music. It declared to be antimodernistic, antiwestern, antijazz but also antifolkloristic, and antitraditional.<sup>70</sup> However, as Edmunds writes, the rejection of tradition never really happened in practise. The concerts that were directed to workers included music of Nikolaj Rimskij-Korsakov (1844–1908), Aleksandr Borodin (1833–1887), Robert Schumann (1810–1856) and Franz Liszt (1811–1886). Many of the members of RAPM composed music

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<sup>68</sup> Edmunds 2003, p. 4. The idea of formalism in musical aesthetics was launched most clearly by Eduard Hanslick in his work *Vom Musikalisch-Schönen* 1854.

<sup>69</sup> Hakobian 1998, pp. 16, 41–42, 45; Roziner 2000, p. 171.

<sup>70</sup> Taruskin 1998, pp. 86–93.

according to ‘The Mighty Five’-aesthetics<sup>71</sup>. The old and the new in the works of RAPM’s musician strengthened the link between the 19th Century tradition and socialist realism. Edmunds’ article indicates also that many artists who were part of certain specific after-revolutionary artistic movement or artistic-ideological organization and even those composers, who emigrated to the West, spoke, acted and wrote controversially. Sometimes they even participated to the activities of the rival movement or organization. Different groups were actually in a very close contact with each others. Edmunds also criticizes the scholars such as Boris Schwarz, Detlef Gojow and Larry Sitsky, who favours the modern music project and claim that the musical avant-garde were victims of RAPM. Instead of that, the real avant-gardists had close relationship to the political authorities and they gave their support to the new regime after the October Revolution.<sup>72</sup> (Asaf’ev was one of them.) Edmunds’ article shows how hard it is to place an artist under one title. In my view it is more justifiable to say that almost all the artistic declarations after the revolution included avant-gardist features. They had many ideological connection points<sup>73</sup>, only their means differed from each others.

Stalin’s terror was in many ways a tip of an iceberg. Socialist realist aesthetics and rhetoric were already built, but it was sharpened and confirmed especially during the *Ždanovščina*<sup>74</sup> (1946–1948). Yet Stalin and his right hand on the field of culture, Andrej Ždanov implemented operations<sup>75</sup> that made socialist realist cultural policy somewhat arbitrary. Many Marxist texts were reinterpreted according to practical and political needs. The aesthetical plurality and variety of interpretations were no longer

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<sup>71</sup> One of the most famous Russian composer and a member of well known musical circle the ”Mighty Five” or ”Mighty Handful” [”Balakirevskij Kružok”, ”Mogučaja Kučka”] (1857–1862). The other members of the circle were: Milij Balakriev (1836–1910), the leader of the group; Aleksandr Borodin (1833–1887), Tsezar’ Kjuj (1835–1918) and Modest Musorgskij (1839–1881).

<sup>72</sup> Edmunds 2003, pp. 4–12.

<sup>73</sup> Those points are indicated among others by Gutkin (1999).

<sup>74</sup> In a words of Richard Stites ”A great cultural pogrom [...] launched in the years 1946–1948”. Edmunds (eds.) 2004, p. 29.

<sup>75</sup> After the year 1934 the main authorities of socialist realism were Andrej Žhdanov and Maxim Gorgij. The time after the Second World War has been called *Ždanovščina*, because during that time Žhdanov persecuted the artists systematically. In 1948 he condemned the opera *The Great Friendship* by Vano Muradeli for its perverting of history. At the same time he launched the formalist accusations for Majskovskij, Prokof’ev, Šostakovič, Hačaturjan, Shepalin and Popov. The composers were compelled to perform public apologies and a promise to mend their ways: to compose in future music that was simpler and more accessible for the wide masses.

possible. As a composer you could never be sure whether you were awarded or accused<sup>76</sup>. During the Stalin terror the given rules in music were often paradoxical. Many things were at the same time required and forbidden. Levon Hacobian has divided these into positive and negative program: in the positive program it was tried to create a consistent or monolithic cognition whereas in the negative program was listed the hierarchy of risks<sup>77</sup>. The party wanted to show what would happen if you didn't follow the official line<sup>78</sup>. The theory and practices appeared sometimes opposites to each other. This was the case for example when the Party advised to avoid 'orientalism' in music but at the same time to exploit the material of folk music of different Soviet republics<sup>79</sup>. The dubious atmosphere left the artists to live in a vacuum and with a constant fear. The fear was personified in Stalin, but in many ways people had been creating their own reality for a long time. In this sense I agree with the revisionists' view that Stalin was some kind of causal peak of certain development, culminated into people who started to guard each other and to convince each other of the party line's righteousness. Eventually the fear made them to consolidate the system as they started to act according to the rules. Stalin carried out along with the party leadership the totalitarian monolithic art requests to the extreme with a help of mental cruelty and brute force<sup>80</sup>. However, even though he wasn't alone responsible for the system, it is doubtful that any of the early revolutionaries who used same kind of rhetoric could have hoped such executing results.

The aforementioned article of Edmunds (2003) reveals yet an important aspect: the human contradictions and the human frailties. In reality there were simultaneous features present in one's mind: the traditional and modern, nihilistic and pluralistic; and yet how distressed people from different ideological stand points speak against their

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<sup>76</sup> Best example of that is Šostakovič. (See for example Fay, Lauren E. *Shostakovich: A Life*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2000.)

<sup>77</sup> Hacobian 1998, p. 96.

<sup>78</sup> One of the most famous cases in the field of art was when the official Party publication Pravda published an article (28.1.1936) "Sumbur vmesto muzyki" [Chaos Instead of Music] of the opera *Lady Macbeth of Mtsensk* by Šostakovič which was until that held as an achievement of Soviet culture.

<sup>79</sup> Marina Frolova-Walker has written what kind of difficulties the 'national-composers' of different Soviet Republics had to go through to compose desirable music. Uzer Gajbekov for example had major difficulties to "Westernize" Azerbaijanian folk themes into his opera and to satisfy the examiners of Moscow and Leningrad Conservatories. (See Frolova-Walker 1998, pp. 331–371).

<sup>80</sup> The Great Terror began in the mid 1930s and touched all layers of society, the party members and the ordinary people.

own beliefs. Stalin's enormous thirst for power made him sick inhuman which left many people still long after his death stricken with fear.<sup>81</sup> Stalin's political terror was condemned under Nikita Hruštšev (1894–1971), but the criticism remained similar for a long time. The aesthetical and pedagogical study books of the 1970s with their normatives and certain kind of absoluteness breathe the Stalinist monolithic cultural policy. However, the motivation in using the same rhetoric and compelled composing methods reduced after Stalin<sup>82</sup>.

### 2.2.2.2 The New Musical Aesthetics

The new aesthetics was formed reasonably fast. The music in the Soviet republics was created in the spirit of Mihail Glinka (1804–1857). It was decided that Soviet music absorbs the best examples of the past and renews their ideological position to be suitable for the new society. The term Realism was launched also in the field of music although it was at first unclear what it meant in music for it was adopted from literature. Next to the representatives of critical realism in literature and in visual arts was placed Aleksandr Dargomyžkij (1813–1869) who had searched musical reflection of Russian speech, i.e. reflection of speech intonations through musical intonations<sup>83</sup>. The human speech became an important dimension for the Soviet music. It was seen as a realistic feature of life, reflecting the truth of life and it was lifted as one of the most important qualifications in art. A good example and a musicological reflection of this was of course Asaf'ev's book *Intonation*. Also the composers from "Balakirev circle" (The Mighty Five) were launched realists and their portraits, written of Vladimir Stasov became classical musical literature<sup>84</sup>. One of the highest estimation was given to Modest Musorgskij (1839–1881) whose words became most illustrative of the Soviet music-aesthetical thinking: "We need no music, no words, no palettes no carvers, [...] living

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<sup>81</sup> Despite that Šostakovič was already old and almost two decades had passed since Stalin's death, the shadow of Stalin lives in his *Testimony* (1979) written by Solomon Volkov. The only exception during the Stalin's aesthetics was the time during the siege of Leningrad. During that period of time composers didn't have to express optimistic utopia of the great heroic society but they were able to bring forth their sorrow (but of course the personal sorrow needed to be in a form of communal sorrow).

<sup>82</sup> Solomon 1979, p. 235; Frolova-Walker 1998, p. 366.

<sup>83</sup> Roziner 2000, pp. 166, 169; See also Asaf'ev: *Simf.E.* 1970.

<sup>84</sup> See *ibid.*, p. 167.

thoughts is to be given, living travels with people [...] do not avoid the beautiful sounds..”<sup>85</sup> The “life-in-itself” became a criterion for art.

The new line turned out to be hard to follow. Imitation of the past was considered ideologically wrong. The past critical realism needed to be positive realism because critical realism was close to naturalism which was considered highly bourgeois. In 1934 the journal *Sovetskaja Muzyka* published an article called “The Development of Cultures National in Form and Socialist in Content” which informed about Stalinist Cultural Revolution.<sup>86</sup> According to the published code the Soviet composers had to ensure that their music wasn’t “national” in content because that would imply to bourgeois nationalistic art. “Only the outward forms, the technical means of expression, might reflect the nationality of each republic, and even this was meant as a temporary concession, until all the national tributaries could merge into a single mighty river of international Soviet culture, socialist in both, in form and in content.”<sup>87</sup> Professor Andrej Rudnev’s article in the journal *Musiikki* in 1947 is descriptive:

In those areas where people cannot compose their own music by themselves, the senior Russians have compelled to go there and to teach the local musicians. They have even themselves composed operas and other music at the beginning, by using the folk music of the natives.<sup>88</sup>

The central musical institutions i.e., the Moscow and Leningrad Conservatories sent their pupils to teach the locals in different Soviet Republics. Colonialist reforms concerned also the traditional instruments that needed to be developed and should have been brought closer to the “art music”. Although the change that occurred was often quite slight, Vesa Kurkela has emphasized that in the extreme cases the musical traditions became totally westernized and they lost all of their essential ethnic features.

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<sup>85</sup> Musorgskij, M. P. *Literaturnoe nasledie. Pis'ma. Biografičeskie materially i dokumenty*. Moscow, 1971, p. 207 quoted in Roziner 2000, p. 167.

<sup>86</sup> *Sovetskaja Muzyka* 1934, p. 3 quoted in Frolova-Walker 1998, p. 334.

<sup>87</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 334. Frolova-Walker has quoted Stalin: “Under the conditions of a dictatorship of the proletariat within a single country, the rise of cultures national in form and socialist in content had to take place so that when the proletariat wins in the whole world and socialism is a part of ordinary life, these cultures will merge into one culture, socialist in both in form and in content with a common language – this is the dialectics of Lenin’s approach to the issue of national culture.” (I.V. Stalin, *Marksizism i nacional’no-kolonial’nyj vopros*. Moscow, 1932, p. 195.)

<sup>88</sup> Rudnev 1947 *Musiikki* 1947 p. 1, 8 quoted in Kurkela 1985, p. 5.

Nevertheless, the socialist system influenced more on the surrounding culture than on music itself.<sup>89</sup>

The creation of music was seen as any industrial process. Composers were thus “culture-workers” and they were expected to serve the state as the members of a collective. They received special assignments from the Party. The main mouthpiece on musical issues was the journal *Sovetskaja Muzyka* that corresponded with the “unanimous Soviet Public opinion”. The favorable themes set by the Party were heroic “drama of the people” and the national epic. It was especially important to emphasize the Russian “origin” in music.<sup>90</sup> Thus the Soviet composers were in front of serious difficulties. They had to compose music that would include the following features:

1. party-minded nationalism which avoids the bourgeois nationalism
2. party-minded realism which avoids the bourgeois naturalism thus sustaining a positive utopia
3. an actual party-minded heroic theme (especially in opera)
4. music had to be understood by the wide masses, but was not to be guilty of too much vulgar simplicity (as RAPM had done) or too much symphonic development (as ASM had been guilty of) that would make music too abstract

Every instruction turned out to be very hard to follow in relation to the form and content. According to the code music had to be easily accessible and contain ‘pesennost’ [songfulness, melodiousness] or ‘raspevnost’ [singfulness]. In practice this meant usage of the old revolution tunes such as “Marseilles” renamed as “Workers Marseilles” and the usage of such material even in classical symphonies.<sup>91</sup> Melodiousness meant also returning to the Romantic tradition, although only in an aesthetical sense. The Romantic worldview had been strictly rejected as an ideology because it was held too elitist and bourgeois. Hacobian has stated that the socialist realism could be divided into two different meanings: its “empirical” nature was

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<sup>89</sup> Ibid., p. 6.

<sup>90</sup> Frolova-Walker 1998, p. 336.

<sup>91</sup> Roziner 2000, pp.167–168.

confusingly obscure and dependent on political and ideological emphasis. The other dimension was “mythological” which was formed spontaneously without any normatives. The mythology sustained unchanged during the Soviet Union despite all kinds of historical changes. It was formed mainly in the literature before the revolution.<sup>92</sup> Nevertheless, as Hacobian has noted, it would be unworthy to list all the comments that influenced or touched the socialist realism in music<sup>93</sup>. The result would be never the less absurd because the socialist realism in music contains historical controversies and falsifying illogical interpretations. Already the notion of the simultaneous existence of “empirical and mythological” reality of the concept contains an impossible equation. Maybe one of the best ways to describe socialist realism is to quote Pauline Fairclough’s comment: “Socialist realism proved impossible to define adequately, since it was basically a mandate for dishonesty.”<sup>94</sup> The history of the concept shows its contradictory nature and its tendency to reconcile with the Party requirements. Socialist realism was some kind of a living and developing reality, which included also its opposites.

As a conclusion I present two tables and a figure that illustrate the concept of socialist realism. The Table 2 contains terms that define socialist realism through prohibition<sup>95</sup> and the Table 3 shows a historical diagram of its formal development. The Figure 1 tries to gather together the things discussed in this sub-Chapter and to present an overall picture of socialist realism in music.

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<sup>92</sup> Hacobian 1998, pp. 96–97.

<sup>93</sup> Ibid.

<sup>94</sup> Fairclough 2002, p. 260.

<sup>95</sup> The idea is initiated by Levon Hacobian 1998, p. 96.

**Table 1. The terms that defines socialist realism trough negation****POSITIVE TERM****Socialist realism**

SOCIALISM – gives everyone equal basis for creating and perceiving art

positive realism

Soviet nationalism -> universalism

Critical Realism

Classical tradition = Russian classical tradition  
(The music of the Mighty Five)

Normativism and ideology in art  
= guarantees the true freedom

folk music – ‘narod nost’ [peopleness or 'popular'] =  
reflection in music of psychological and realistic-living  
character of people’s lives.

**NEGATIVE TERM****The Western capitalistic art  
– ”dekadent” art**

CAPITALISM – enslaves the artists for the service of capitalistic machine and makes it a monopoly of the ruling class.

formalism = modernism, abstractionism,  
avant-gardism

expressionism

Bourgeois nationalism ->

cosmopolitanism

Bourgeois naturalism

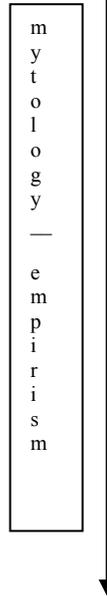
classical tradition = elitism

chaotic freedom in art = in capitalism  
the law of the demand and supply  
doesn’t guarantee the freedom of art

popular culture = polluted by the  
capitalist culture

**Table 3. HISTORICAL FORMATION**History of the concept

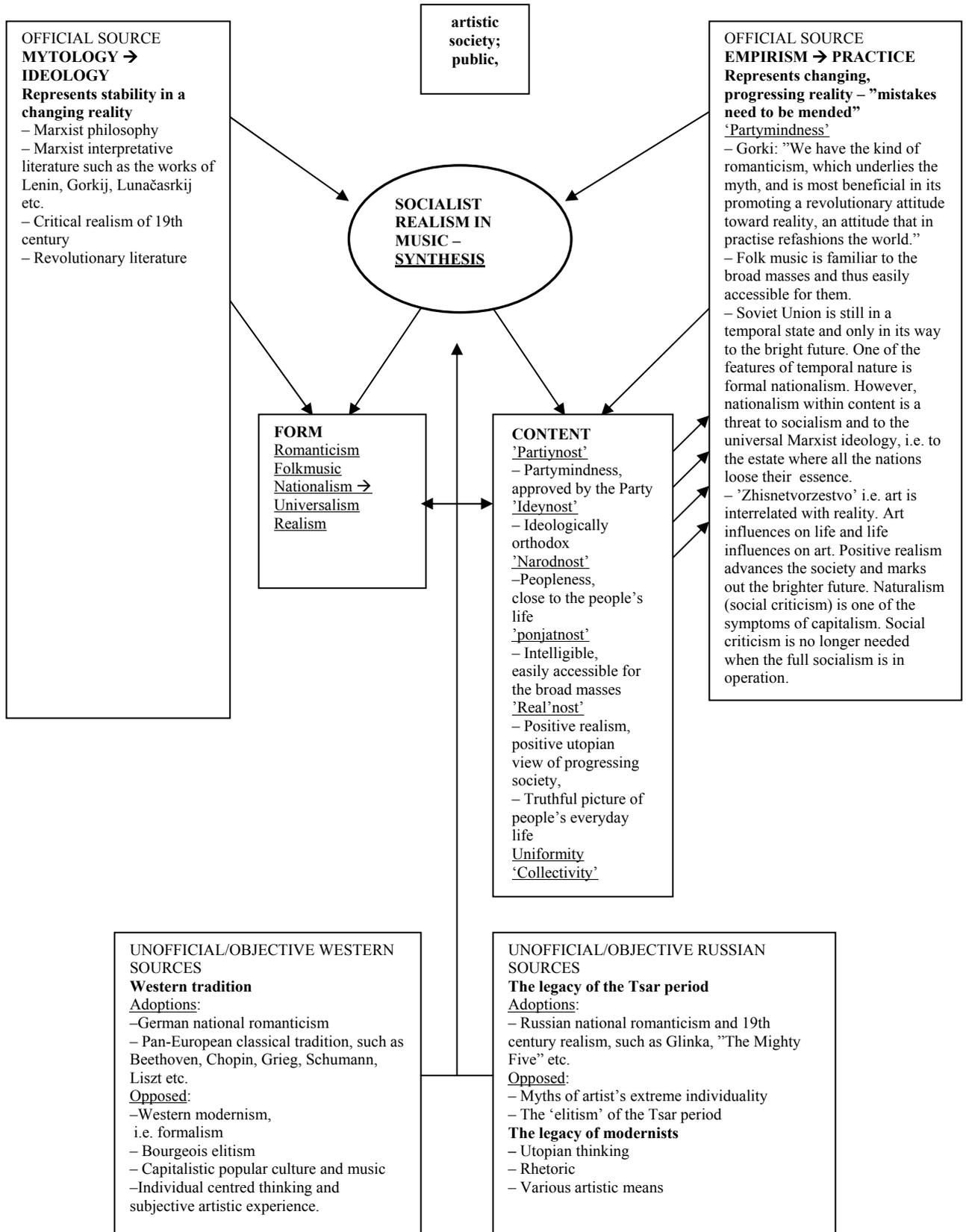
- Critical realism
- Appeared for the first time in 1932 in a journal *Literaturnaja gazeta*
- It was announced as the states' official aesthetical method in the first meeting of the Soviet writers 1934.

Formation of the content

(Formation of socialist realist rhetoric)

1. **Philosophy:** Marx, Engels, the Russian “pre-Marxists” of the 10<sup>th</sup> century: Bellinskij, Černicevskij, Dobroljubov, etc.
2. **Literature:**  
19th century critical realism  
20th century Russian modernists
3. **Political level:**  
Party
  - a) 1917-1928 Lenin, Lunačarski, Party representatives and theoreticians.
  - b) 1932--> Stalin, Zhdanov, other partyminded theoreticians.
4. **Musical level:**
  - a) Proletkult, ASM, RAPM
  - b) The Union of Composers USSR
5. **Society:** Artistic society, public

Figure 1.



### 3. BORIS VLADIMIROVIČ ASAF'EV'S LIFE AND THE SOVIET MUSICOLOGY

#### 3.1 A Short Biography

Boris Vladimirovič Asaf'ev was born in 1884 in St. Petersburg to a family of a minor official Vladimir Aleksandrovič Asaf'ev. According to his own words, he spent quite an uninteresting childhood.<sup>96</sup> Asaf'ev's family early recognized the musical gifts of the son and he started his musical activity already in 1897 in Kronštadt where he was studying his second degree. In 1903, after graduation from Kronštadt's gymnasium, Asaf'ev started to study at the historic-philological faculty of the St. Petersburg State University. He studied under the guidance of some very influential teachers such as F. F. Sokolov and neo-Kantian philosopher and psychologist Aleksandr I. Vvedenskij (1856–1925), who introduced him to the theories of 'energitism' of a German chemist Wilhelm Ostwald (1853–1932).<sup>97</sup>

In 1904 Asaf'ev met with Rimskij-Korsakov, who encouraged him to take more music lessons. At the same year he gained entry to the Conservatory.<sup>98</sup> Asaf'ev took lessons on instrumentation from Rimskij-Korsakov and on composition with Anatolij Ljadov (1855–1914) and among his classmates were Nikolaj Mjaskovskij and Sergej Prokof'ev.<sup>99</sup>

On the 15<sup>th</sup> of August in 1904 Asaf'ev met Vladimir V. Stasov, an art critic and a propagandist who was impressed by Asaf'ev's gifts.<sup>100</sup> Stasov became an influential intellectual mentor to Asaf'ev and among many things he taught Asaf'ev some very important working methods in the Russian National Library. Asaf'ev was also many times invited to Stasov's gatherings. In those gatherings he met a writer and one of the

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<sup>96</sup> Asaf'ev: *Vospominanija* 1974, p. 317.

<sup>97</sup> Biography 1984, pp. 18–20, 36–37; Orlova in Asaf'ev: *Muz.Form.* 1971, p. 6; Frolova (eds.) 2001, p. 87.

<sup>98</sup> Biography 1984, p. 37.

<sup>99</sup> Asaf'ev has been reported of having felt an outsider with Prokof'ev's and Mjaskovskij's creative presence. However he considered them as his good friends (See Nestyev 1960, p. 23; Tull 1976, p. 7).

<sup>100</sup> A letter by Stasov to his brother in *Stasov V. V. Pis'mo k rodnym*. Vol. 3, (1962), p. 235; quoted in Biography 1984, p. 47.

founders of socialist realism, writer Maxim Gorkij, painter Ilja Repin (1844–1930); composer Aleksandr Glazunov (1865–1936) and the world famous bass singer of the Marinskij Theatre, Fedor Šaljapin (1873–1938).<sup>101</sup> Asaf'ev graduated from the St. Petersburg State University in 1908, having minors on history and a specialization on Renaissance and the 19<sup>th</sup> century Russia. Rimskij-Korsakov died at the same year and left Asaf'ev with a crisis since he had hoped to study composition with the eminent composer.<sup>102</sup> In 1909, Asaf'ev married Irina Hozjaševa.<sup>103</sup> Some sources claim that Asaf'ev graduated from St. Petersburg Conservatory in 1910.<sup>104</sup> However, McQuere, Krjukov and the official Soviet biography hint that he had some difficulties with Ljadov and he ceased formal education in music already after Rimskij-Korsakov's death in 1908 to work on his own.<sup>105</sup>

Asaf'ev made his debut as a composer at those times. By 1910 he had composed already a number of works including some large pieces such as the children's opera *Snežnanja koroleva* (The snow queen) composed in 1907 and produced in 1908. He also secured his first professional position and started as a rehearsal pianist for the ballet troupe of the Marinskij Theater.<sup>106</sup>

The time Asaf'ev spent in Marinskij influenced obviously on him as a ballet composer. There he made friends with a ballet dancer and a teacher Vaclav F. Nižinskij (1889–1950), a ballet dancer and teacher Nikolaj G. Legat (1869–1937) and an Italian conductor Riccardo E. Drigo (1846–1930). Asaf'ev also dreamed about becoming a director at those times. It turned out to be unsuccessful.<sup>107</sup> He spent the summer of 1910 studying at the museums in France, Germany and Italy. These trips enabled him to continue the broad intellectual and aesthetic development, which he had begun at the university and under Stasov's conduction. He was also interested in the members of Mir

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<sup>101</sup> Ibid., p. 47.

<sup>102</sup> McQuere (Eds.) 1983, p. 218.

<sup>103</sup> Biography 1984, pp. 31, 61.

<sup>104</sup> *Izbrannye Trudy* I 1950, p. 6; Tull 1976, p. 8; see "Asaf'ev" in *Balet. Russkij enciklopedija* 1981; *Russkij balet enciklopedija* 1997; *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians* 2001.

<sup>105</sup> Krjukov in *Materialy* 1982, pp. 7–8; McQuere (Ed.) 1983, p. 218; Biography 1984, p. 61; Asaf'ev (1923) quoted in Haas 1998, p. 19.

<sup>106</sup> Biography 1984, pp. 67–70.

<sup>107</sup> Asaf'ev: *Reminisces* 1974; Biography 1984, p. 64.

Iskusstvo (The World of Art)<sup>108</sup> and the Association of Russian Artists and planned to write an article about them.<sup>109</sup> Asaf'ev traveled abroad and spent time in France (in Paris), in Austria and in Italy as a guest of Drigo in 1911.<sup>110</sup>

Asaf'ev began his active career as a musical critic in 1914. For start, he worked at the modernist journal *Muzyka* (Music)<sup>111</sup>, a Muscovite weekly musical journal. One of the redactors was his old friend from Conservatory Nikolaj Jakovlevič Mjaskovskij who had originally encouraged Asaf'ev to start writing. On that time he made friends with Aleksandr Kastal'skij (1856–1926).<sup>112</sup>

Asaf'ev's first articles "Petrogradskie pis'ma" (Letters from Petrograd) dealt with the Marinskij Theater and the new compositional works and composers. He also wrote down some bibliography of the sources which he had quoted in his articles. By the end of the year 1915 the journal had published over 50 articles under the penname Igor Glebov.<sup>113</sup>

Andrej Rimskij-Korsakov<sup>114</sup> (1878–1940) invited Asaf'ev to contribute to the newly established *Muzykal'nyj sovremennik* [Musical Contemporary], a "moderately academic" journal that concentrated on Russian classics. At first Asaf'ev had his doubts about the journal because there sometimes appeared curtailment and modification.<sup>115</sup> He agreed to join the board after all, but worked there less than a year because Rimskij-Korsakov refused to publish his radical praise of a concert that contained music by Prokof'ev, Mjaskovskij and Stravinskij. Pjotr P. Suvčinskij (1892-1985) and a group of

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<sup>108</sup> A world famous group of Russian artists, founded in 1890 by A. M Benois, S. P. Djagilev and D. V. Filosofov.

<sup>109</sup> He did write about them eventually during the blockade of Leningrad 1941–1943 writing a biographical cycle of texts *Mysli i Dumy* where he dedicated the whole first section to Mir Iskusstva. It was not published until after author's death. Fragments of the manuscript were published in the journal *Soveskaja Muzyka* 1955, No.1, pp. 48–58 but the total work did not see the light before 1966.

<sup>110</sup> Biography 1984, pp. 67–71.

<sup>111</sup> Vladimir Deržanovskij (1881–1942) worked as an editor in *Muzyka*. See "the List of Journals".

<sup>112</sup> Biography 1984, p. 89.

<sup>113</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 71–73, 89 According to Tull (1976, p. 10) it was originally Deržanovskij who suggested Asaf'ev this name because of the lack of his self-confidence. Nevertheless, it was also popular at the time to write critics under a penname.

<sup>114</sup> Son of the composer Nikolaj Rimskij-Kosakov.

<sup>115</sup> It is unclear to me what he means by that. Maybe he refers to A. Rimskij-Korsakov's negative attitude towards Stravinskij. (See Taruskin 1996, pp. 1121–1124.)

other contributors left the journal together with Asaf'ev.<sup>116</sup> According to Stephen Walsh, Suvčinskij, who was a good friend of Stravinskij told him about this event and its reasons when they met in Berlin in 1922.<sup>117</sup>

Asaf'ev started to write to a magazine called *Russkaja volja* (Russian Will/Freedom) in 1917. According to Orlova Asaf'ev had already published about 25 articles in two months of which few were not signed and thus they are not attached to his record. One of the central figures of his writings was Šaljapin, whose performances he called “the pulse of life”.<sup>118</sup>

In the summer of 1917 there was an arising plan to start a new journal *Muzykalnaja mysl'*, where Asaf'ev was planned to function as the chief-editor, accompanied by Suvčinskij (as the financial investor) and a poet and scholarly critic Vasilej V. Gippius (1890–1942). The ideas of the journal that appear in Asaf'ev's letters to the people he wished to join as colleagues were strongly symbolist.<sup>119</sup>

The monthly journal did not succeed because the First World War among other uncertainties interrupted it. The project was decided to reform into collections of articles – *Knigi o muzyke* (Books about Music) that was later renamed as *Melos* (Vol. 1 published in 1917 and Vol. 2 published in 1918). It concentrated in its pages especially on the elements of Russian music – *songfulness*<sup>120</sup>. Among the people mentioned above a group of other professionals contributed *Melos*: Aleksandr Blok, Andrej Belyj, Nikolaj Losskij (1870-1965), Boris Ejhenbaum and some other notable cultural figures. The editors were Igor Glebov (Boris Asaf'ev) and Pjotr Suvčinskij. Asaf'ev's most notable article in *Melos* were “Puti v buduščee” (Pathways to the Future) (1917) and

<sup>116</sup> Biography 1984, pp. 78–81; Taruskin 1996, pp. 1121–1124.

<sup>117</sup> Walsh 1999, p. 357; Taruskin 1996, p. 3.

<sup>118</sup> *Russkaja Volja*, (1917), No. 236; quoted in Biography 1984, pp. 81–82.

<sup>119</sup> Participants of the journal were the following names from different fields of culture: Apsenij Mihajlovič Avraamov (1886–1944), Semen Semenovič Bogatyrev (1890–1960), Nadežda Jakolevna Brjusov (1881–1951), Viktor Mihalilovič Beljaev (1888–1968), Rejnhol'd Moricevič Glier (1874–1956), Aleksandr Dimitrievič Kastal'skij (1856–1926), Nikolaj Dmitrievič Kaškin (1839–1920), Georgij Eduardovič Konjus (1862–1933), Evgenia Eduardovna Linjova (1853–1919), Antonin Viktorovič Preobraženskij (1870–1929), Nikolaj Nikolajevič Čerepin (1873–1945), Julij Dmitrievič Engel' (1868–1927). See the List of names on the back. The plans have been discussed elsewhere in this work.

<sup>120</sup> This term concerned later during the era of socialist realist aesthetics essential aesthetical quality in music.

”Soblazny i preodolenija” (Temptations and triumphs) (1918). The articles in *Melos* were prepared before the Bolševik Revolution.

After the October Revolution, Asaf’ev was one of the first cultural figures who collaborated with the new regime.<sup>121</sup> Among Anatolij Lunačarskij, who was soon to become a Commissar of Public Education, and Futurist poet Vladimir Majakovskij, he contributed the newspaper *Novaja Žizn’* edited by Maksim Gorkij.<sup>122</sup> The relationship between Asaf’ev and Lunačarskij developed into friendship.<sup>123</sup> They found each other allies and dedicated themselves for public education. It must have been an obvious disappointment for Asaf’ev when Lunačarskij was removed from his post in 1929.<sup>124</sup>

In 1918 Asaf’ev joined to NARKOMPROS where he worked during 1918–1921 in the affairs of MUZO and TEO (Drama Section), both divisions of Narkompros. Lunačarskij’s choice to point Arthur Lur’e<sup>125</sup> to head MUZO reflects quite liberal policy in the field of music at the time.<sup>126</sup> According to the Soviet biography, Asaf’ev wrote 57 articles in 1918–1919 to the journal *Žizn’ Isskustva* (Life of Art), which was the official organ of the NARKOMPROS. Asaf’ev was part of the preparation staff together with Lur’e and Nikolaj Strel’nikov (1888–1939) planning a Music Publishing house in 1919 when MUZO possessed already in its hands four music printing houses, twenty two music and instrument stores and eight warehouses.<sup>127</sup> One of the Asaf’ev’s most important contributions to the musical education was that he compiled a guide to technical musical terminology to the benefit of the new mass audience.<sup>128</sup>

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<sup>121</sup> Lunačarskij preferred to create voluntary cooperation ties to the arts intelligentsia. On 1.12.1917 Pravda published his appeal for all the artists to fulfil their civic duties and report to the Winter Palace office of the People’s Commissar of the Public Enlightenment. Among those who followed were the composer Shchepachev, critic Karatygin and the composer-writer Boris Asaf’ev. (Schwarz 1983, p. 13.)

<sup>122</sup> Tull 1976, p. 14.

<sup>123</sup> This is evident from the mutual correspondence of Asaf’ev and Lunačarskij.

<sup>124</sup> Tull 1976, pp. 20, 46.

<sup>125</sup> Of whom Schwarz (1983, p. 13) has written: ”a young composer with modernistic leanings, whose aggressive policies alienated many musician”.

<sup>126</sup> Ferenc 2004, p. 9.

<sup>127</sup> Kruzanov 2003, p. 617.

<sup>128</sup> Tull 1976, p. 20.

All the Soviet sources emphasize Asaf'ev's significant role as a great "propagandist" of Russian opera of the time.<sup>129</sup> The promotion work over opera was an important task because many Party members saw it as a remainder of the aristocracy and wanted to get rid of it.

Yet Asaf'ev had time to work as a composer. In 1918 he composed his ballet *Sneguročka* (Snow Maiden) based on music of Edvard Grieg (1843–1907) and *Carmagnole*, based on music of French Revolutionary period. Its premier was given in Petrograd Workers Club on the first anniversary of October Revolution and was announced as the first Soviet ballet.

In 1919 Asaf'ev was employed at the music division of the Russian Institute of Arts History as a staff member and became its dean in 1921. He edited a collection of theoretical articles in 1923 called *De Musica* and later similar collections appeared as yearbooks.<sup>130</sup> Particularly important trait of Asaf'ev's life was his eagerness in organizing concerts of new music attached to the Institute of Arts History in 1924 and as an active member of Leningrad ASM or LASM which was founded in 1926. However, Asaf'ev resigned from LASM rather soon and founded a rivalry group with Vladimir Ščerbačev (1887-1952) called *Kružok novoj muzyki* (The Circle of New Music). Its program was more radical: it concentrated expressly on the newest music and operating as forum of modern music.<sup>131</sup>

Asaf'ev emphasized that it was very important to be in contact with the western modern music. In an article "We and the Musical West" (1927) he wrote: "Acquaintance with the best examples of western music will help the development of Soviet music, will liberate it from the amateurishness and the speculation of 'revolutionism', will lead towards the exploration of new forms and new means of musical expression. To show the masses the musical art of the West will provide criteria for the evaluation of Soviet musical creativity." After mentioning the works of Alban Berg's *Wozzek* and *Der Sprung über den Schatten* he continued: "As to the quality of artistic accomplishment,

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<sup>129</sup> See for example Asaf'ev: *Ob opere* 1976.

<sup>130</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 38.

<sup>131</sup> Schwarz 1983, p. 53; Haas 1998, 14.

can one compare these works with the Soviet operas that have appeared in the last years? Not in any circumstances. Does it not follow that Soviet musicians ought to learn, ought to acquire the necessary techniques, not from the era of the ‘Mighty Five’, but from the era of contemporary music?”<sup>132</sup> Schwarz writes that this kind of opinion would have been an insult in the 1930s during Stalin’s tightening art policy, but in 1927, it was still possible to believe that the Soviet composers could go through Western methods without getting permanently infected and destroyed by Western ideologies.<sup>133</sup> In 1925, Asaf’ev was appointed by Lunačarskij to organize the new musicological section of Leningrad Conservatory, but continued to work still at the Institute of Arts History.

Towards the 1930s a more proletarian stance began to dominate the musical arena and Asaf’ev, along with many other modernist oriented figures, was defeated by the attacks of RAPM’s musicians. He was mostly accused of formalism and “westernism”. Asaf’ev’s letters to Lunačarskij<sup>134</sup> and Mjaskovskij date from this period: “I cannot work. Nothing succeeds. My job was to infect myself with music and to write in such a way to infect others...I have no other concept of musicology or criticism. Now, alas, one cannot write this way. So I’ve turned sour.”<sup>135</sup> The moderately liberal art policy was ended when Lunačarskij was replaced with Andrej Bubnov and later with Andrej Ždanov. ASM was ceased in 1931 for a short benefit of RAPM. Asaf’ev stopped serious writing for a while, resigned from the Conservatory, from the administration of the Russian Institute of Arts History and of the Philharmonia, dedicating himself in composition.<sup>136</sup>

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<sup>132</sup> Gozenbud. *Russkii Sovetskii Opernyi Teatr*, Leningrad (1963), p. 104; quoted in Schwarz 1983, pp. 65–66.

<sup>133</sup> Ibid, pp. 65–66. See also Haas (1998, p. 15–16), who has quoted Asaf’ev’s article “Kirziz Muzyki: nabroski nabljudatelja leningradskoj muzykal’noj dejstvitel’nosti” (Music in Crisis: Notes from an Observer of Leningrad’s Musical State of Affairs) published in a journal *Muzykal’naja kul’tura* (Musical Culture) (1924) No 2. He defended Western new music against Malko’s sharp criticism in *Žizn’ Iskusstvo* (Art Life) (1924) No. 30, p.13.

<sup>134</sup> In his letters to Lunačarskij in the summer of 1929 Asaf’ev was scared for his career because RAPM’s journal *Proletarskij Muzykant* (No. 2, pp. 28, 31) kept attacking him and his works. In his letters he asked Lunačarskij to have a faith in the ideological integrity of his thoughts or to ask him to resign from his post. Asaf’ev mentioned also that he was holding back his book about Stravinsky because he was scared that he would be accused of “Westernness” and of being interested in “emigrant” music. (*Materialy* 1981, pp. 144, 145, 164.)

<sup>135</sup> Letter to Mjaskovskij (15.4.1930) quoted in Schwarz 1983, pp. 125–126.

<sup>136</sup> Tull 1976, p. 48; Biography 1984, p. 183.

Richard Tull has remarked that Asaf'ev "seems to have lacked the requisite creative initiative and imagination to create anything but music of a derivative or ancillary nature, incapable of standing on its own musical merits" although he was willing to apply his theoretical work in practice and to compose according to his verbal ideas.<sup>137</sup> However, Asaf'ev's compositions stand historically as interesting examples of socialist realism. Even though many of them are now forgotten, they remained at the program of the Soviet Theaters till the end of Soviet Union.<sup>138</sup> His musical scores were studied at the musical academies as examples of proper aesthetics and formula of socialist realism.<sup>139</sup>

During the German siege of Leningrad (1941–1944) Asaf'ev stayed in the exhausted city. He was evacuated to Moscow in a poor health in 1943 and hospitalized for several months.<sup>140</sup> However, he continued his ambitious musicological work and composition, and he was working as the director of the scientific research department of Moscow Conservatory since 1943. His work was rewarded accordingly: he was elected to full membership of the USSR Academy of Science in 1943. Asaf'ev was the first and only musicologist to have ever had this honor.<sup>141</sup>

His last years were somewhat mysterious. In the years of the cultural purges žhdanovščina, the party attacked furiously on the cultural spheres. Asaf'ev's name decorated many official papers as a sign of approval. He had remained silent even though many of his old friends such as Prokof'ev and Mjaskovskij, had been charged with formalism. Many things that he had fought for the 1920s were now illegalized. The 1948 resolution of the Central Committee was crushing and after a short while accompanied by "self-critical" statements which took place in the General Assembly of

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<sup>137</sup> Ibid., p. 70.

<sup>138</sup> Nowadays all are forgotten, only the ballet "Bahšisarajskij Fontan" is back in Marinskij Theater's program rehabilitated by Valerij Gergiev, the artistic director of Marinskij. To read more about Asaf'ev's compositions see Tull 1976, pp. 70–76. A list of his most essential compositions remains on the appendixes of this work.

<sup>139</sup> Personal communication in 23.1.2005 with Irina Roininen, who studied in Musical Academy of Baku in the former Soviet state in Azerbaijan. M. Etkind writes in 1966 that Asaf'ev's ballet circle played an important role in the development of Soviet choreographic art (Asaf'ev: *Mysli i dумы* 1966, p. 7).

<sup>140</sup> Several notable cultural people were evacuated through that road. Some of them refused to leave, because they wanted to stay in the city and keep up the fighting spirit and hope among the other citizens.

<sup>141</sup> Tull 1976, pp. 78–79.

Soviet Composers. The new directorate was elected to place the ORGKOMITET in the First All-Union Congress of Soviet Composers and it consisted of party disciplinarians excluding Asaf'ev who was designated as its chairman.<sup>142</sup> However, he was too ill to even attend the Congress. He died in less than a year (1949).<sup>143</sup>

### 3.2 Boris Asaf'ev and the Soviet Musicology in Growth

Different sources (Western along with the Soviet) present Asaf'ev as a “father of Soviet Musicology”. Russian musicology received a formal recognition as an independent musical discipline as late as 1921 when Soviet Government established two research centers: The Russian Institute of Arts History in Petrograd and The State Institute for Musical Science in Moscow. Before that, the musicological debate had occurred principally on the pages of different journals based on the 19<sup>th</sup> Century critical tradition. This tradition could be divided into two generations: Kjuj, Stasov, Serov, Herman Laroš (1845–1904) as the first and Kaškin, Semjon Kruglikov (1851–1910) and Engel' as the second.<sup>144</sup> The main functionaries who established the new institutes were Lunačarskij and his right hand Asaf'ev.<sup>145</sup> Asaf'ev had written already in 1918 (published in 1920), an article which concentrated on musicological tasks in the Soviet Union.<sup>146</sup> Asaf'ev was elected as the dean of the Petrograd Institute in 1921.<sup>147</sup> Some scholars think that it was possible only with a help of Lunačarskij<sup>148</sup>.

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<sup>142</sup> Tull hints that Asaf'ev's placement as a chairman of the new directorate was only an honorary appointment.

<sup>143</sup> Ibid., pp. 88–89.

<sup>144</sup> See Campbell, 2003. He has edited an anthology containing English translations of articles from the above-mentioned authors.

<sup>145</sup> Lunačarskij commented the musicological situation in 1926 with following words: “If one does not count single, quite often purely selfless attempts to build a science of music in Russia or in the field of religious singing (line – Razumovskij, Smolenskij and our effective member A. V. Preobraženskij) [--] then the focus of the Russian musicology lies in the capital study works of S. I. Taneev, [P. P.] Sokal'skij [--] scientific articles of Serov, Laroš and etc. The only one closer to us is the Muscovite musician B. Javorskij, a grand musicologist, who has his own method and his ‘school’.” Lunačarskij 1971, p. 201. See also Schwarz 1983, p. 89.

<sup>146</sup> The article was called “Naš Dolg” (Our Duty) in *Prožloje Russkoj Muzyki* (1920) Leningrad.

<sup>147</sup> Schwarz 1983, pp. 88–89. The musical section was named RITM (Razryad istorii i teorii Muzyki) and changed later into OTIM (Otdel teorii i istorii muzyki).

<sup>148</sup> Neil Edmunds has speculated in his article that without a help of Lunačarskij Asaf'ev wouldn't have ever gotten so far in his career. Edmunds (2001) in a speech held at seminar in Bristol in 2003. Also Schwarz (1983, p. 89) seems to think that way.

Asaf'ev, a member of NARKOMPROS, wanted to rearrange the whole training of musicologists into comprehensive musical studies containing both theory and practice at the Institute of Art History and Leningrad Conservatory. His radical and modern views caused some splits at the traditional Conservatory. Glazunov wrote on Paris in 1928: "It is very hard for me to part with faculty members of the performing division with whom I have never had any friction, but the prospect of being in the hands of the composers' faction headed by Asaf'ev is not to my liking."<sup>149</sup> No wonder about that because Glazunov's education was western oriented and traditional. Asaf'ev on the contrary criticized the blind admirers of Western education:

I believe that the time will come when in conservatories there will not be taught blindly what they teach in Leipzig or in Berlin, but they will understand that for us to write down counterpoint of Gregorian Cantus Firmus does not give anything. We have different assignments than Germans or French. We cannot forget the existence of Russian songs which need to be adjusted to our present conditions.<sup>150</sup>

Although Asaf'ev's ideas did not succeed totally as he had planned, he became a mentor of musicians and future musicologists in the Soviet Union for generations.<sup>151</sup> Among his post-doctoral students were Roman Gruber, Semjon Ginzburg, Aleksei Finagin, Ivan Sollertinskij, Juri Tjulin, Mihail Druskin, Arnold Alšvang, Aleksej Olkhovskij and Anatol Butzkoi (1892–1965). All of them became famous musicologists in the Soviet Union. Asaf'ev's research acquired, as Schwarz has put it: "cohesion of thought and method bearing the indelible imprint of the leader's personality". The subjects ranged from the late 18<sup>th</sup> century and 19<sup>th</sup> century music till the modern contemporary music.

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<sup>149</sup> *Glazunov. Izledovanie, Materialy*, Vol. 2, p. 29; quoted in Schwarz 1983, p. 99.

<sup>150</sup> Although Asaf'ev's line is quite provocative in tone and a clear attack to old academic tradition, he has also a constructive point of view towards the past authors such as Taneev and he builds bridges. His main point is fruitful from the etnomusicological point of view: the Western methods won't do justice when transcribing Russian folk songs. See Asaf'ev 1926, "O polifoničeskom isskustve, ob organnoi kul'ture i o muzykal'noj soveremennosti" (On Polyphonic Art, the Culture of Organ, and Music Modernity) in *Polifonija i organ v soveremennosti* [Polyphony and the Organ in Modern Times]. (Program booklet to organ recital, given by Isai A. Braudo, 21. Feb. 1926.) Leningrad: State Institute of Arts History, "Bahovskij Circle".

<sup>151</sup> See Olkhovsky 1955; Scwartz 1983; Tull 1976, pp. 32–39.

Asaf'ev emphasized musicology as 'living' and he wanted to relate the research to contemporary life.<sup>152</sup>

The main achievement of his work at the institute was *De Musica*, collections of essays edited by him (1925, 1926 and 1927) and praised by Lunačarskij in his article of the journal *Vestnik Kommunističeskoj akademii* (The Communistic Academy Messenger).<sup>153</sup> However, many scholarly works written under the guidance of Asaf'ev were later charged of formalism (mainly those concerning contemporary musical techniques). Mikhail Druskin who fought for the "modernism" wrote a book *New Piano Music* (1928).<sup>154</sup> It was charged in 1948. The former student of Asaf'ev, Aleksej Olkhovskij writes that "up to the mid-thirties very few of the [Leningrad] Institute's collaborators deemed it necessary to base their conclusions exclusively on the doctrines of 'Marxism-Leninism'" and that most of them were "either pupils of Asaf'ev or completely shared his views, the activity of the [musical] section had the clearly expressed character of free idealistic investigation which was evident in the work of Asaf'ev himself."<sup>155</sup> Only by leafing through the articles of *De Musica*, one can observe that Olkhovsky's book contains a lot of truth despite its subjective and emotional tone.

According to Druskin there was a great deal of rivalry between the historical schools of Leningrad and Moscow Conservatories in the 1920s and 1930s. Mihail V. Ivanov-Borečkij (1874–1936) stressed more historic-cultural factors in Moscow, while Asaf'ev wanted to combine musico-historical aspects with theoretical ones. The Moscow Conservatory was the leading star in the field of theory.<sup>156</sup>

At large, Asaf'ev's position among musicological authors of the Soviet Union was unbreakable.<sup>157</sup> However, there were many other talented musicologists at the time who could have earned the same status that was given to Asaf'ev on 1940s. According to my personal information, a group of Soviet scholars tried in the 1970's to promote the name

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<sup>152</sup> Schwarz 1983, pp. 89–92.

<sup>153</sup> Lunačarskij 1971, p. 201.

<sup>154</sup> Preface was written by his teacher Asaf'ev (Schwarz 1983, p. 128).

<sup>155</sup> Olkhovsky 1955, p. 60. Olkhovsky emigrated from the Soviet Union to the United States in 1949.

<sup>156</sup> Schwarz 1983, p. 380.

<sup>157</sup> See for example the preface by Orlova of the book *Muzykal'naja forma kak process* (Musical Form as a Process) 1971, p. 6.

of Boleslav Javorskij (1877–1942), but the study was forbidden by the Soviet officials.<sup>158</sup> In the beginning of the 1920s Javorskij was an experienced pedagogue and possessed a high state status as a remarkable educational theoretician<sup>159</sup> as well as a many-sided character. His name was well known also beyond the borders. In 1926 he and his school was praised in the book *Contemporary Russian Composers* by L. L. Sabaneev. Javorskij was one of the leading theoreticians in music already a decade before Asaf'ev and he was using the term *intonation* in his theories of *ladovyj ritm*<sup>160</sup>. Asaf'ev had no close personal connections with Javorskij nor did he ever admit to have leaned towards him in his writings, but he wrote in a personal letter in 1915 about Javorskij: “In his method I have found something that I have long searched for – a firmly scientific basis for music theory”<sup>161</sup>.

Was the detailed study on Javorskij forbidden, because it formed a threat to the theoretical work and domination of Boris Asaf'ev? Orlova & Krjukov's biography states that it is unjustified to say that Asaf'ev built his theory of intonation on the basis of Javorski's works, because there is a fundamental difference between the interpretations of the term intonation. Javorskij uses the term as a designation of constructive element of musical speech on the grounds of the famous study of “Modal Rhythm” whereas for Asaf'ev, it is inseparably linked with the conception of melos as a

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<sup>158</sup> Kac, Boris. Personal communication, spring of 2004.

<sup>159</sup> All State Conference was held in 1930 and headed by A. V. Lunačarskij. One of the major tasks of the conference was to explain the usefulness of Javorski's main work *The Theory of Harmonic Rhythm* as well as to talk about his other theoretical studies (understanding of intonation, expanded harmonies and so on) which have been in use till the present day in modern musicology. *Dmitrij Šostakovič v pismah i dokumentah*. (Dmitri Shostakovich through his letters and documents.) 2000, p. 6. See also Lunačarskij 1971 p. 431.

<sup>160</sup> *Ladovyj Ritm* (Modal Rhythm) is a musical-theoretical concept formulated by Javorski. Originally (in 1908) it was named “Construction/Building of Musical Speech” and in 1918 it was called “A Theory of Acoustical/Auditory Gravitation”. The most famous concept *Ladovyj Ritm* was introduced in 1912. The base of the theory was formulated in the first 20 years of the 20th century. The term *Ladovyj Ritm* means expanding the harmony in time. The main premise of the theory is the existence of two contrary types of relation: stable and unstable. The fundamental meaning of musical dynamics and in particular, of the construction of harmony, lies in the gravitation of instability to resolution - to the stability. *Muzykal'naja Enciklopedija* 3, 1976, p. 144–145.

<sup>161</sup> Letter to V. V. Derzhanovsky, (May, 1915) in *B. Javorskij. Stat'i, vospominanija, perepiska*. [Articles, recollections, correspondences], (ed.) I. S. Rabinovič, 2d ed. Moscow: Sovetskij kompozitor, (1972); quoted in McQuere 1983, pp. 222–223. Yet there exists a book about Javorskij and Asaf'ev by Jaroslav Jinarek: *K otázce tzv. dynamických muzikologických koncepsí poriemannovských (Javorskij, Kurth a Asaf'ev)* (Concerning the so-called dynamic post-Riemann musicological concepts [Javorskij, Kurth, Asaf'ev]), *Hudební věda* (1967) pp. 71–105, English summary on pp. 176–78. I have not been able to acquaint with the book.

content of musical art.<sup>162</sup> McQuere (1983) writes that it is easy to find similarities “in the face of radically different purposes and styles: 1. both were obsessed by the need to find a universal explanation for music and both found it in dialectic and in the process of intonation. 2. Whereas Javorskij was interested in the mechanics of musical motion, Asaf’ev was interested in kinetics. 3. Javorskij studied intonations as cells in modal structures; Asaf’ev saw them as reflections of society. 4. For Javorskij, dialectic contrast made tritone resolve; Asaf’ev assumed that dialectics operate even in large forms. 5. Javorskij’s universal theory was based on tritone systems; Asaf’ev’s universal is the intonational communicative basis of music. In sum, McQuere writes that Javorskij and Asaf’ev developed theories that seem like the practical and philosophical sides of the same questions.<sup>163</sup>

However, as far as I know, the issue lacks still a comprehensive research and thus the comparison between the terminology and theoretical work of those two scholars would be very attempting to do in the future.

### 3.3 The Political Dimension of Boris Asaf’ev

The character of Boris Asaf’ev will always remain a bit of a mystery to the scholars. Part of it is due to his controversial position in the musical as well as in the political field of the Soviet Union. Many scholars like to speculate whether he was a “good” or a “bad” guy in relation to the party-mindedness. Some of them as Boris Schwarz<sup>164</sup>, Andrey Olkhovsky<sup>165</sup> and Robert Craft<sup>166</sup> seem to think that Asaf’ev was more or less a victim of Soviet “mental misprision”. Others<sup>167</sup> have more critical opinions about his double standard dealing with the Soviet government.

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<sup>162</sup> Biography 1984, pp. 263–264.

<sup>163</sup> McQuere 1983, p. 249.

<sup>164</sup> [1972], 1983.

<sup>165</sup> See *Music under the Soviets. The Agony of an Art*. 1955.

<sup>166</sup> Craft in Asaf’ev 1982, p. xvi.

<sup>167</sup> I refer to the newer generation of Western scholars, such as Laurel Fay, Richard Taruskin etc.

Asaf'ev certainly cooperated with the new government to some extent from the early days of the Revolution and gave provably his support to the new government and for some of the new changes that took place.<sup>168</sup> However, he was also under some serious attacks of RAPP. After a decade since the attacks, Daniel' Žitormirskij (1906–), a teacher of the history of music at the Moscow Conservatory wrote a positive article about Asaf'ev. It was published in the official music journal *Sovetskaja Muzyka*. According to Olkhovsky this article was inspired by Party circles and it started a persistent campaign for the purpose of drawing Asaf'ev into the role of ideological leader of Soviet music.<sup>169</sup> Many features speak for Olkhovsky's assumption. The building of Asaf'ev's character towards 'big' Soviet musicologist parallel to Stasov continued long time after his death. His writings on visual arts were not published until 1966 and the introduction article placed him next to the big figures of Stasov, Rimskij-Korsakov, Glazunov and Ljadov, and made even a comparison between Stasov's *Isskustvo XIX veka* (Art of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century) and Asaf'ev's writings.<sup>170</sup>

It is difficult to estimate whether his influence was mitigating or strengthening towards the path that led to the monolithic cultural policy. His influence was surely positive on the general field of musicology if one counts pure facts from his Soviet biography: the mouth and development of his musical aesthetical and musical theoretical work, bringing forth new music on the 1920s and speaking on the behalf of young composers as well as preserving the old tradition inherited from Stasov. A positive feature was also his eagerness as a musical educator and his, if not reformative, but productive path as a composer. His youth writings, as well as his appeals to Lunačarskij indicate how hard he tried to oppose the narrow-minded cultural policy and how much the attacks towards him frightened him at the end of 1920s, when he finally decided to cease his writing for a long period.

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<sup>168</sup> Lunačarskij preferred to create voluntary cooperation ties to the arts intelligentsia. On 1.12.1917 Pravda published his appeal for all the artists to fulfil their civic duties and report to the Winter Palace office of the People's Commissar of the Public Enlightenment. Among those who followed was the composer Ščepačev, critic Karatygin and the composer-writer Boris Asaf'ev. (Schwartz 1983, p. 13.)

<sup>169</sup> Olkhovsky 1955, p. 82.

<sup>170</sup> See the foreword by Mark Etkind in Asaf'ev: *Mysli i Dumy* 1966, pp. 4, 10.

A cause of many negative traits was Asaf'ev's seemingly professional ambitiousness. He had to make radical compromises in order to preserve his job and to get to the top. He had to give up his new-music dreams or at least keep them hidden. What were basically left for him to hold on after releasing the socialist realist aesthetics were Russian classical tradition and the big Western masters such as Beethoven and Mahler. Also his statements concerning the party's resolutions during the ždanovščina are unsatisfying. Asaf'ev did not help his friends who were accused of formalism by the Politburo's resolution of music issued on 10<sup>th</sup> of February in 1948. What was Asaf'ev's share on the resolution and what is the truth about Asaf'ev's report that was read in the All-Union Congress of Composers remain still unexamined. Asaf'ev's report did not show any sympathy or defensive attitude over his friends that had been charged.<sup>171</sup> Many studies speculate that it was most obviously modified by the Party members and prepared collectively. Many scholars believe that his name was maybe even lent to certain papers without his permission.<sup>172</sup> Tull brings a fruitful view, initiated by Schwarz, that the February 1948 resolution consisted of many themes that were consistent with the writings of Asaf'ev throughout his career, and that one of the goals of the Resolution was to lift up Asaf'ev as an official character and persuade him to associate his name with it.<sup>173</sup> However, further on Tull's suggestion places Asaf'ev to a position of a victim by hinting that "it is possible that the seriously ill man's only knowledge of the events of January and February, 1948, were obtained from a reading of the resolution, which merely hints at the treatments to which his friends were subjected."<sup>174</sup> According to this view he would be seen as a voluntary but unwitting instrument of the Party's design. However, Tull admits that it is rather conjectural. Several events, starting from the formalist campaign towards Šostakovič in 1936, must have shown Asaf'ev what the Party was capable of and yet he was still cooperating. Asaf'ev's report can be seen also as an agreement to cooperate.

This study does not take a stand to one direction or another because of the lack of a thorough investigation on the matter. Most probably the final truth in that matter will

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<sup>171</sup> Asaf'ev 1948, pp. 22–27.

<sup>172</sup> Werth (1953) speculates this in his *Musical Uproar in Moscow* 1949 at The Strange Case of Professor Asaf'ev, pp. 96–98. See Olkhovsky 1955, pp. 83; Schwarz 1983; Tull (1976), pp. 89–91.

<sup>173</sup> Tull 1976, pp. 92–98.

<sup>174</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 97.

remain a mystery. However, it is clear that a person, who was able to get a membership of the USSR Academy of Science, will continue to have a negative cloud above him.

#### 4. THE FIRST LITERARY PERIOD OF BORIS ASAF'EV (IGOR GLEBOV) AND ITS PHILOSOPHICAL BASIS

Asaf'ev was already thirty when he started his career as a serious musical critic. Nevertheless, he contributed many newspapers and journals during his lifetime. There are some 944 literary listed works and 202 compositions and many of them are large books and symphonies. More than a half (489) date from the years 1921–1930 and of that 300 are listed from 1925 to 1928.<sup>175</sup>

The most notable written works of Asaf'ev's of that period (1920–1930) are: *Symphonic Etudes* (1922) *A Book about Stravinsky* (1929), *Russian Music from the Beginning of the Nineteenth Century* (1930)<sup>176</sup> and *Musical Form as a Process* (1930)<sup>177</sup>. According to Soviet authors, in the early works Asaf'ev developed his terminology and theoretical language that received their cultivated forming in the book *Intonation* (1947). The next Chapter presents a general survey of the philosophical and theoretical roots of Asaf'ev's thinking. After that the sub-Chapters introduce three philosophical and literary trends that influenced on Asaf'ev. The practical examples, i.e. how these trends appear on Asaf'ev's literary production, are presented along with introducing his most important works of the first literary period. Asaf'ev's literary production is presented in a chronological order. The focus is generally on the “development” of the main concepts that appear in Asaf'ev's theory of intonation, which is discussed in the Chapter Five. My presentation attempts first of all to deepen but also to challenge the Soviet view and point of importance (mostly by Elena Orlova) on his literary production.

##### 4.1 The Philosophical and Theoretical Roots of Boris Asaf'ev

Elena Orlova has noted many interesting facts about Asaf'ev's philosophical roots which have not yet, as far as I know, been challenged by any one. And by this I mean

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<sup>175</sup> *Izbrannye trudy* V, pp. 350–379.

<sup>176</sup> The book was mostly related to the pedagogical work of Asaf'ev at the Leningrad Conservatory.

<sup>177</sup> The *Musical Form as a Process* was actually the first part to the larger work of *Intonation* (1947), but it fell under an ideological cloud and wasn't published again until 1963.

their informative side is not considered in detail. Moreover they are exploited by Western scholars.<sup>178</sup>

Orlova has listed in her preface to the book *Symphonic Etudes* (1970) many musical figures who had their share on Asaf'ev's mind and who are easy to accept: Stasov and Serov as the representatives of the music-aesthetical heritage of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>179</sup> Major influences on him were his teachers at the Conservatory Ljadov and Rimskij-Korsakov and his fellow students Mjaskovskij and Prokof'ev. Sergej Taneev (1856–1915) was one of the biggest influences to the whole generation of musicians of that time, not least to Asaf'ev, who dedicated many writings to him<sup>180</sup>.

The major influences on Asaf'ev in the music-theoretical field were Boleslav Javorskij and German musicologist Ernst Kurth (1886–1946) whose musical theories, influenced by Georg Wilhelm F. Hegel (1770–1831), represented opposite to a static and schematic approach to formal analysis. Kurth was seen in a particularly negative light by Soviet scholars, because his theories were influenced by “idealist philosophies” (i.e. philosophies which reject the objective existence of matter) such as Wilhelm Ostwald's (1853–1932) “energetic-monistic” philosophy and Schopenhauer's concept of “Will” as an essence of man.<sup>181</sup>

Schopenhauer used Immanuel Kant's (1724–1804) differentiation of conceptual thinking and sensory experience giving higher estimation to the latter. He considered that conceptual thinking was only an instrument for practical life related to his strong will-to-live. According to Schopenhauer one of the goals of philosophy was to free human from conceptual thinking which was directed to fulfill the physical needs of human. He saw that there were two ways to avoid it: 1. through an ascetic denial of the will-to-live and 2. through an aesthetical contemplation, which was oriented

<sup>178</sup> For example David Haas has been quite lazy in writing references to Orlova's texts. Following Orlova, which he does not always clearly indicate, he has pointed out (1992, p. 412) that Asaf'ev's early writings owed much to the philosophy of Bergson (1896, 1907) and to the Neo-Kantian thoughts.

<sup>179</sup> Those two were praised in the Soviet Union. See for example Ryžkin: *Russkoe Klassičeskoe muzykoznanie v bor'be protiv formalizma*. Moscow, Leningrad: Gosudarstvennoe muzykal'noe izdatel'stvo, 1951.

<sup>180</sup> See for example *Pamjati Sergeja Ivanoviča Tanejeva 1856–1946*. (Protopopova, Blačeslav, Ed.) Moscow: Muzgiz, 1947.

<sup>181</sup> Tull 1977, pp. 166–167.

aesthetically and not according to the physical needs. According to Schopenhauer, art forms are more ‘objective’ than the subjectively conditioned objects of perception, the genius thereby communicates knowledge. Schopenhauer classified arts according to their relation to conceptual thinking. According to him, architectonics stood on the lowest level, because it dealt with stiff and dead ideas while he saw music as the most free from words and conceptual thinking. However, Schopenhauer claimed that in a sense, music is mimetic, but it does not ‘copy’ the familiar world. It is rather a copy of Will itself by coping and capturing the essence of emotions (joy, pain, horror, etc.), through which the will does its worst in human life.<sup>182</sup> No other philosopher has given as high valuation to music as Schopenhauer. His influence was major in a field of arts, especially on Symbolists and among artists such as Wagner and Stravinsky.

Asaf'ev became interested in Kurt's *Linear Counterpoint* (1917) and *Romantic Harmony and its Crisis in Wagner's "Tristan"* (1923) in 1917. Kurt's *Linear Counterpoint* was translated in Russian in 1931: *Osnovy linearnogo kontrapunkta. Melodičeskaja polifonija Baha* by Z. Eval'd and edited by Asaf'ev, who wrote also the Russian preface.<sup>183</sup> In his preface, Asaf'ev's evaluation of Kurth's conceptions was positive, but later on he started to criticize some of Kurth's essential points. In *Musical Form as a Process* Asaf'ev talked about simultaneous formation of his conception of processual-dynamic nature of musical form together with the conceptions of Kurth: "The monumental works of Ernst Kurth; *Crisis of Romantic Harmony* and *Linear Counterpoint* once and for all led to an application of a whole cycle of dynamical definitions of musical phenomenon replacing former static formal terminology. Current musicology struggles towards the formation of terms which would not reflect crystallized and stark nature but living process – the formation of determinate phenomenon."<sup>184</sup> Asaf'ev and some Soviet scholars insisted that Kurth's and Asaf'ev's conceptions of dynamic nature of musical phenomenon were formed at the same time but they did not influence on each others. Asaf'ev stated that his dynamical conception of musical phenomenon developed earlier in 1917 than it did in Germany<sup>185</sup>. However,

<sup>182</sup> Määttänen 1995, pp. 213–215, Cooper (eds.) 1997, p. 151.

<sup>183</sup> Orlova in Asaf'ev: *Muz.Form.* 1971, pp. 5–6.

<sup>184</sup> Asaf'ev: *Muz.Form.* 1971, p. 198; See also Mazel 1957, p. 74.

<sup>185</sup> Asaf'ev: *Muz.Form.* 1971, p. 197.

at the time of the given statement, it was already dangerous to admit of having been influenced so strongly by a Western scholar, i.e. the influences needed to be curtailed. As it was a custom in the Soviet Union, Asaf'ev's and Kurt's connection points were explored in detail but only to point out the superiority of the Soviet science. According to Lev Mazel, theories of Asaf'ev and Kurth developed independently from each other, but their simultaneous development reflects the general tendencies in philosophy of the era. Yet Mazel has illustrated quite thoroughly the similarities between the theories by excusing himself with a clime that recognition of the principal differences between the two conceptions helps to understand Asaf'ev's scholarly output.

In a general philosophical sense Stasov's influence on Asaf'ev was probably most crucial. He was a link to the history. Stasov had personally met Glinka and he had been in close association with the 'Mighty Five'. Asaf'ev followed him in many respects: he was interested in Russian nationalism and folklore in music; one of his major achievements was his life-long study on Glinka.<sup>186</sup> Also his interest in Musorgskij and admiration towards Shakespeare were due to Stasov.<sup>187</sup> Asaf'ev inherited his mentor's equally broad interest on both the tradition and the modern.<sup>188</sup> Yet another important trait of Stasov was his vision of different arts as something unified and total, not isolated from the spiritual life of a human being.<sup>189</sup> As Stasov had done, Asaf'ev developed a manner of making parallels, mostly between music, paintings and poetry. He used 'interartistic'<sup>190</sup> terminology and quotations when analysing music. Asaf'ev also made a point of importance that he was widely interested in all arts and had an equal passion for visual arts, poetry and for music. He chose to focus on music only

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<sup>186</sup> It was published in 1947 and dedicated to the memory of Stasov and Ljadov (Asaf'ev: Glinka 1950).

<sup>187</sup> Biography, p. 51; Tull 1976, p. 5.

<sup>188</sup> As Orlova (Biography 1984, pp. 75–76) has emphasized, Asaf'ev indicated already in his early articles a special respect towards the Russian classics such as Rimskij-Korsakov (although Rimskij-Korsakov was hardly "a classic" at that time having died only recently), Musorgskij etc. Next to the operas of Rimskij-Korsakov Asaf'ev placed the operas of Glinka, Musorgskij, Borodin, Glazunov, Sergeij Taneev, Ljadov, Aleksandr Skrjabin (1871–1919), but also lifted up the future promises: Mjaskovskij, Prokof'ev, Igor Stravinsky, Nikolaj Čerepnin (1873–1945) and Vladimir Rebikov (1866–1920). The biggest attention was directed to the major talents Stravinsky and Prokof'ev. (Asaf'ev's article in *Muzyka*, [1914] No. 203, pp. 94, 209, 634; quoted in Biography 1984, pp. 75–76.)

<sup>189</sup> Ibid., p. 55; Tull 1976, p. 33.

<sup>190</sup> By this term I refer to what was typical for the time period. Literature adapted musical terminology and vice versa.

because of his personal gifts.<sup>191</sup> Late in his life, Asaf'ev wrote that three men from the “old generation” played particularly important role in his life and had influenced on his way of looking at art and life: Stasov, Kastal'skij and Nikolaj Kaškin (1839–1920).<sup>192</sup>

The philosophers noted by Orlova were not all accepted in the Soviet Union. Russian modernists, especially symbolists, French philosopher Henry Bergson, German philosophers Hegel, Theodor Lipps (1851–1914) and neo-Kantian Ernst Cassirer had a deep impact on Asaf'ev's thinking.<sup>193</sup> David Haas (1992, 1998) has written about Bergson's influence on Asaf'ev's theory, especially on his most essential aesthetical concepts.<sup>194</sup> Yet a more original notion by Haas is the comparison with Mihail Bahtin (1895-1975).<sup>195</sup> However, it needs a more detailed investigation, as Haas himself has noted:

Whatever his inspiration, Asaf'ev's application of a musical term to literature reflects larger trends in the humanities at that time. Metaphorical speech derived from common musical terminology was nothing less than epidemic in the years 1917 to 1930 in the Soviet Union.<sup>196</sup>

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<sup>191</sup> Asaf'ev: *Mysli i dumy* 1966, p. 25.

<sup>192</sup> A. D. Kastal'skij: *Stat'i, vospominanija, materialy*. (Moscow, 1960) quoted in Biography 1984, p. 89.

<sup>193</sup> “At the time when *Symphonic Etudes* were written, Asaf'ev already had in mind the fundamental premises for the theory of *Intonation*. Particularly the problems of “melos”, “symphonism” and “an artistic form in music” started to get shape already in the articles of the book *Melos*. The leading role in the psychological aspect of the *Symphonic etudes* was at the theory of *Intuition* by French idealistic-philosopher H. Bergson and the theory of *Včuvstvovanija* which means a theory of empathy by German philosopher T. Lipps. Maintaining mystical capacity of intuitive view of Bergson, his study of “organic worldview” leads to the understanding of “vital impulse” (*élan vital*) – which was Asaf'ev's first interest that [Bergson's] philosophy. N. Losskij propagandized the philosophy of Bergson in Russia and especially the book which Asaf'ev mentions many times in his work.” (Orlova in Asaf'ev: *Simf.E* 1970, pp. 6–7; Orlova in Asaf'ev: *Muz.Form.* 1971, p. 6.)

<sup>194</sup> See his articles “Boris Asaf'ev and the Soviet symphonic Theory” (1992) and “Boris Asaf'ev and Form-as-Process Aesthetic” (1998).

<sup>195</sup> Haas 1998, p. 423.

<sup>196</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 424.

#### 4.1.1 Symbolism and Music: Anderej Belyj and Boris Asaf'ev – the Problem of Interchange of Terminology

The Symbolist thoughts appeared in the letters, written by Asaf'ev in 1917, when he was planning the journal *Muzykal'naja mysl'* with Suvčinskij. Orlova has maintained that Asaf'ev's words at this point show clear evidence that refers to the literary-symbolist movement, particularly to Aleksandr Blok.<sup>197</sup> According to her, the theurgical idea of the Symbolists of that period was clear in the pages as it stated “[t]he ultimate goal of all arts becomes formed in its relationship to religion – the final achievement of all strength of personal as well as social will [which] already now far ahead opens its most boundless religious abilities and on the way there – artistic.”<sup>198</sup> Orlova writes that similar ideas, which were mostly due to the time-period, can be found in Asaf'ev's articles and personal letters<sup>199</sup>.

The influence of the texts of Russian modernists is quite easy to trace in Asaf'ev. A typical trend of the Symbolist era was interchange of terminology between different fields of art and a so-called “union of arts”. This feature came from the Romantics' urge to break out of the confines of a particular art form and to graft one form to another.<sup>200</sup> This causes confusions in meaning. For example as Steinberg states, the relationship between music and Symbolism has always provoked differences of opinion among critics: how the music and verse are related, can these two art forms be compared, or is it simply a matter of them sharing common terms.<sup>201</sup> The same problematic question is stressed by Boris Kac in his study of music in poetry: for a musicologist it is rather unconvincing, when a poet uses musical terms (in musical sense) in his literal work. It invokes often mistaking images, which means that the words have different meanings in a musicologist's mind from that of a poet's mind. The major problem appears especially

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<sup>197</sup> “Maintaining music its privilege, – to communicate in annotation, – ‘Muzykal'naja mysl'’ will not, however, present the rest of the art as subordinate to its position. It will state in its pages different kinds of questions in the broadest understanding, regardless of their indirect connection to music [--] there will be articles in relation to other spheres of arts besides music, but only as far as musical principles appear in them, which means the laws and the character of musical thought.” (Asaf'ev's letter to E. V. Bokoslovskij in May 1917; quoted in Biography 1984, p. 83.)

<sup>198</sup> Ibid., p. 84.

<sup>199</sup> Ibid.

<sup>200</sup> Steinberg 1982, p. 15.

<sup>201</sup> Ibid., p. 3.

when exploring the “Symbolists’ thought” about music.<sup>202</sup> However, there are some exceptions. For example Russian Symbolist poet Anrej Belyj was trained both in music and in literature and had a great deal more grounds to talk about their relationship than many other Russian symbolists.<sup>203</sup> Belyj was the first one who tried to point out a direct link between music and lyric poetry. In his essay ‘The Song of Life’ (1908) he states that the content of verse is its melodiousness and it is this element above all which is characteristic of lyric poetry. For Belyj *symbol* was always musical.<sup>204</sup>

Belyj wrote his four poems, called symphonies during 1902–1908. They were something midway between verse and prose where he tried to employ musical form. His symphonies represented to him a serious attempt to life’s symphonic comprehension in all its complexity. This distinguishes his Symphonies radically from, for example, Brjusov’s ‘Symphonies’. The idea of Belyj and Mallarmé of the ‘Symphonic’ is similar to Asaf’ev’s *simfonizm* because it refers to the quality of a particular object and not so much to the form. Asaf’ev stated: “not all symphonies are symphonic”.<sup>205</sup> Like Brjusov and Belyj, Asaf’ev tried to liberate music (art) from its formalist constrains. (However, paradoxically, Belyj’s symphonies searched traditional musical form for their appearance.)

In his symphonies Belyj tried to apply also the sonata form to the treatment of themes, but it proved to be unsuitable to the ‘word’ and he abandoned it<sup>206</sup>. It is funny that Belyj’s literary works were full of tricks and “new harmonies”, but he was conservative in his musical taste<sup>207</sup>. Asaf’ev was also much more conservative as a composer than as

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<sup>202</sup> Kac 1997.

<sup>203</sup> He had studied music’s theory under the guidance of Taneev and been a part of different musical circles as d’Alheim’s ‘House of Song’ and the friendship with Medtner’s brothers (Steinberg 1982, pp. 37–41, 48.)

<sup>204</sup> Ibid., p. 33.

<sup>205</sup> Asaf’ev: O Simfonizme 1981 [1921], p. 96.

<sup>206</sup> Steinberg 1982, p. 35.

<sup>207</sup> Belyj’s musical idols were Chopin, Grieg and the German romantics and Wagner, whose *Oper und Drama* he studied. He disliked Prokof’ev, Schönberg or Stravinsky despite that his own creative path as a writer was similar to them. Steinberg notes that it was most likely due to his friendship with the composer Nikolaj K. Medner, one of the members of “Muscovite troika” as Asaf’ev has called it. The other trends of the era were Rahmaninov and Skrjabin who also disliked Prokof’ev. Steinberg thinks that Medner brothers convinced Belyj of the ‘irritability’ and alien tendencies of foreign modernists manifested in Belyj’s sharp criticism in his *Arabesques*. (Ibid., p. 39–40, 48.)

a writer and critic. His literary works contained way more modern ideas than his rather conventional music.

Belyj declared in “The Meaning of Art” that “the study of verbal orchestration must be based on the application of the theory of music to the theory of poetry.”<sup>208</sup> Asaf’ev must have read Belyj’s words when he wrote: “The substance of modern poetry is in its ‘musicalization’, in its aspiration in using words not like in the manner of understanding or thinking, but in the manner, that they are sounding instrumental accords of an idea.”<sup>209</sup> Parallel with Belyj’s musical desires, one can see Asaf’ev’s will to put the processes of music in words. He wrote in 1916 that his dream was “to learn to understand music so that he can translate all elements of a composition into words – into ideas and concepts not by fantasizing, i.e. not in the sense of programmatic commentary and explanations and not as technical analysis.”<sup>210</sup> In 1946 he wrote in the journal *Sovetskaja Muzyka*, that he wrote about intonation almost aphoristically.<sup>211</sup> Asaf’ev, who was trained also as a philologist, wanted to describe the developmental nature of music by words without using mere musical-theoretical terminology. The theory of music was present in him as the logic of the text, but the terminology was adopted from literature. This passage invites also to a comparison with the ideas of Henry Bergson, who thought that the role of the philosopher was to find the right combination of metaphors drawn from the physical world that could induce an individual to reflect on the continuity of his consciousness<sup>212</sup>. By times Asaf’ev even formed new neologisms, such as “apostolyj-pioner” (which is rather controversial in meaning). In *Symphonic Etudes* Asaf’ev identified music with “a reflection of the truth of life, soul” and determined intoned musical sound as experienced, emotionally comprehended, ‘vosčyvstvovannoe’ word<sup>213</sup>. Vosčyvstvovat’ is an old Russian verb that means “to feel”. A free translation of Asaf’ev’s word would be thus something like ‘sentient word’. Several examples of the same kind can be found from Asaf’ev’s texts.

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<sup>208</sup>This article was published in his book *Simvolizm* p. 221 in 1910; quoted in *ibid.*, p. 47.

<sup>209</sup> Asaf’ev: *Simf.E* 1970, p. 201.

<sup>210</sup> This is quoted by David Haas in his book *Leningrad’s modernists: studies in composition and musical thought, 1917–1932*. The same sentence is quoted in *Biography* 1984, p. 85. It is stated by Asaf’ev’s in his letter to Raiskij in 15<sup>th</sup> of May in 1916 and published in the journal *Muzykal’naja žizn’*.

<sup>211</sup> Asaf’ev 1946, p. 92.

<sup>212</sup> See Haas 1998, p. 57.

<sup>213</sup> See Asaf’ev: *Simf.E* 1970, p. 195.

Asaf'ev's writing contains same kind of 'dynamic character' and 'organic development' as he found from musical works. He even tried to arrange his book *Symphonic Etydes* dynamically as if it were a musical piece (see for more details in Chapter 4.3). This invites to a comparison with Belyij's poem-symphonies. Although their means were quite different from each other, they stand as good landmarks of an idea to unite the different fields of art.

#### 4.1.2 Theodor Lipps and *Včuvstvovanie*

The word *včuvstvovanie* (orig. *Einfühlung*, [empathy]) appears in Asaf'ev's writings frequently. It is adopted from the works of a German philosopher and psychologist Theodor Lipps.<sup>214</sup> Lipps' theory<sup>215</sup> was popular in Russia at the beginning of 20<sup>th</sup> century<sup>216</sup>.

In his "theory of empathy" Theodor Lipps talks about empathic projection into definite sorts of objects. According to him the cause of an aesthetic object is "oneself" or "the ego", who feels pleased or other vice stimulated "in view" of the object. Lipps states that

This specific characteristic of estetic pleasure has now been defined. It consists in this: that it is the enjoyment of an object, which however, so far as it is the object of *enjoyment*, is not an object, but my self. Or is it the enjoyment of the ego, which however, so far as it is [a]esthetically enjoyed, is not myself but objective. Now, all this is included in the concept of empathy. [...] Empathy is the fact here established, that the object is myself and by the very same token this self of mine is the object. Empathy is the

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<sup>214</sup> Lipps' book *Grundlegung der Ästhetik* was published in 1903 in Germany (Hamburg and Leipzig: Verlag von Leopold Voss. His books were translated in Russian in by M. A. Liharev. *Rukovodstvo k'' Psihologii* (Guide to Psychology) was published in Russian in 1907. It contains a special Chapter on empathy (*včuvstvovanie*) pp. 213–229.

<sup>215</sup> Theory of empathy can be traced back to J. G. Herder (1744–1803), J. G. Hamann (1730–1788), F. T. Vischer (1807–1887) and Robert Vischer (1847–1903) and Wöffling's 'interpretive seeing'. (Smith 1998, p. 49.)

<sup>216</sup> Orlova in Asaf'ev: *Simf.E* 1970, p. 6.

fact that the antithesis between myself and the object disappears, or rather does not yet exist.<sup>217</sup>

How this empathy works Lipps explains with various examples.<sup>218</sup> Shortly, aesthetic empathy concerns one's inner imitation of an object. According to Lipps "my inner activity" in this imitation is exclusively bound up in a two-fold sense with the observed object: the activity I feel, I experience as derived entirely from the contemplation of the perceived movement.

[t]he object of my activity is not my own activity which I behold. I feel active in the movement or in the moving figure, and through projecting myself into it I feel myself striving and performing this same movement. There is no other way; because under the assumed conditions there cannot be any other movement but observed one as the object of my consciousness. In a word, I am now with my feeling of activity entirely and wholly in the moving figure. Even spatially [--] I am transported into it [--] my consciousness is concerned, entirely and wholly identical with it.<sup>219</sup>

Yet Lipps states that the sensations of one's bodily state are entirely absent in aesthetic contemplation.

In [a]esthetic imitation I become progressively less aware of muscular tensions or the sense-feelings in general the more surrender in the contemplation to the [a]esthetic object. All such preoccupations disappear entirely from my consciousness. I am completely and wholly carried away from this sphere of my experience. [--] The sense-feelings, or whatever kind they may be, do not in any way enter into [a]esthetic contemplation and into [a]esthetic enjoyment. It absolutely belongs to the nature of [a]esthetic contemplation to eliminate them. [--] To the [a]esthetic object belongs absolutely nothing but what lies immediately in the object of contemplation.<sup>220</sup>

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<sup>217</sup> *Archiv für die gesamte Psychologie*, Vol. I (1903; Schertel M. & Reader M., Trans.) in Reader M. 1979, p. 372.

<sup>218</sup> See for example *ibid.*, p. 373 or Lipps, Theodor *Grundlegung der Ästhetik*. Germany: Hamburg and Leipzig: Verlag von Leopold Voss, 1903, p. 96.

<sup>219</sup> *Archiv für die gesamte Psychologie*, Vol. I (1903; Schertel M. & Reader M., Trans.) in Reader M. 1979, pp. 374–375.

<sup>220</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 376–378.

As Orlova has noted Lipps has a clear influence on Asaf'ev's book *Symphonic Etudes*<sup>221</sup>. Lipps's theory was discussed at the time in N. V. Samsonov's book *Istorija estetiĉeskikh yĉenij* (The History of Aesthetic Study) which included a special chapter on Lipps' theory of *vĉyvstvovanie*. Orlova writes that the substance of Lipps' theory consists of the denial of an objective existence of beauty in things and in the events of reality. "It sets out a statement that the beauty is brought to them only by human thoughts and emotions. However, Asaf'ev doesn't interpret his [Lipps's] theory very straightforwardly, but makes his own free interpretation of it. An example of that can be found in the article about Kaškin which is written on the same year with *Symphonic Etudes*. There Asaf'ev clarifies the term *vĉyvstvovanie* [empathy] with the following words: "It is 'a construction of alien life' on the basis of empathy". According to Orlova, one of the interpretations of Lipps' theory in *Symphonic Etudes* lies in an interpretation of the concepts of the opera *Tales about the Invisible Town Called Kiteže* by Rimskij-Korsakov (besides his name is mentioned in the process of analyze)<sup>222</sup>. Orlova writes:

Stating a question about possibilities of different approaches to the suite of *Kiteže* [--] Asaf'ev comes to a following conclusion: 'all of these are given ad libitum to a listener.' Further, through engaging the understanding of *vĉyvstvovanie* [empathy], it [the chapter] draws a question about differences in the different stylistic trends in operatic work of Rimskij-Korsakov.<sup>223</sup>

However, Lipps' theories were propagandized in the West by Vernon Li<sup>224</sup> and by a German art scholar Wilhelm Worringer (1881–1965)<sup>225</sup>. Asaf'ev's interpretation of Lipps' theory follows the latter. Worringer's doctoral thesis *Abstraktion und Einfühlung* (Abstraction and Empathy) was published in Munich in 1908. It gave theoretical

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<sup>221</sup> "It has to be remembered that his theory had positive valuations among Russia symbolists, an impact which is distinguished aloud also in Asaf'ev's book. Andrej Belyj writes in one of his commentaries of his article in a book *Symbolism*: Lipps has advanced his theory of *vĉyvstvovanie* [empathy]. At this point of the Lipps' aesthetics – it is one of the most interesting aesthetics of the present." (Orlova in Asaf'ev: *Simf.E* 1970, p. 7.)

<sup>222</sup> See Asaf'ev: *Simf.E* 1970, p. 103.

<sup>223</sup> Orlova in Asaf'ev: *Simf.E* 1970, p. 8.

<sup>224</sup> Violetta Peiget, an English writer and an art theoretic.

<sup>225</sup> Orlova in Asaf'ev: *Simf.E* 1970, p. 8.

support for the widespread Modernist tendency in which enthusiasm for so-called primitive art was conjoined with interest in modern forms of abstraction<sup>226</sup>.

Worringer's purpose in his essay was to show that the modern aesthetics, which proceeded from the concept of empathy (and of which he credited mostly Lipps for his comprehensive formulation<sup>227</sup>), is inapplicable to wide tracts of art history. Worringer stated that "[n]o psychology of the need for art – in the terms of our modern standpoint: of the need for style – has yet been written."<sup>228</sup> By this Worringer means the history of feeling about world, "psychic state in which at any given time, mankind found itself in relation to the cosmos, in relation to the given phenomena of the external world."<sup>229</sup> An essential term in his argumentation is *artistic volition*:

The psychic state is disclosed in the quality of psychic needs, i.e. in the constitution of the absolute *artistic volition*, and bears outward fruit in the work of art, to be exact in the style of the latter, the specific nature of which is simply the specific nature of the psychic needs. Thus the various gradations of the feeling about the world can be gauged from the stylistic evolution of art, as well as from the theogony of the peoples. Every *style* represented the maximum bestowal of happiness for the humanity that created it. [--] Thus all valuations made from our standpoint, [--] which passes judgement exclusively in the sense of the Antique or the Renaissance, are from a higher standpoint absurdities and platitudes. [--] The need for *empathy* can be looked upon as a presupposition of artistic volition only where this artistic volition inclines toward the truths of *organic life* that is toward naturalism in the higher sense. The sensation of happiness that is released in us by the reproduction of organically beautiful vitality, what modern man designates beauty, is a gratification of that inner need for self-activation in which Lipps sees the presupposition of the process of empathy. In the forms of the work of art we enjoy ourselves. *Aesthetic enjoyment* is objectified self-enjoyment. The value of a line, of a form consists for us in the value of the life that it holds for us. It holds its beauty only through our own vital feeling, which, in some mysterious manner, we project into it. Recollection of the lifeless form of a pyramide or of the suppression of life that is

<sup>226</sup> Harrison & Wood (eds.) 1992, p. 68.

<sup>227</sup> Worringer [1910], 1950 wrote that "modern aesthetics, which has taken the decisive step from aesthetic objectivism to aesthetic subjectivism, i.e. which no longer takes aesthetics as the starting-point of its investigations, but proceeds from the behaviour of the contemplating subject, culminates in a doctrine that may be characterized by the broad general name of the theory of empathy. This theory has been clearly and comprehensively formulated in the writings of Theodor Lipps." *Abstraction und Einfühlung* (1908), (Bullock, Michael, eds. and trans. 1910, 1953), quoted in Harrison & Wood (eds.) 1992, p. 68.

<sup>228</sup> Worringer [1910], 1950 in *ibid.*, p. 69.

<sup>229</sup> *Ibid.*

manifested, for instance, in Byzantine mosaics tell us at once that here the need for empathy, which for obvious reasons always tends toward the organic, cannot possibly have determined *artistic volition*. Indeed, the idea forces itself upon us that we have an impulse directly opposed to the empathy *impulse*, which seeks to suppress precisely that the need for empathy finds its satisfaction. This counter-pole to the need for empathy appears to us to be the urge to *abstraction*.<sup>230</sup>

After reconstructing the need of the past primitive cultures for abstraction (because of the different psychic worldview) Worringer asks what the psychic presuppositions for the urge to abstraction are. According to him whereas the precondition for the urge to empathy is a happy pantheistic relationship of confidence between man and the phenomena of the external world, the urge to abstraction is the outcome of a great inner unrest inspired in man by the phenomena of the outside world, more accurately their “physical dread of open places”.<sup>231</sup>

Their most powerful urge was, so to speak to wrest the object of the external world out of its natural context, out of the unending flux of being, to purify it of all its dependence upon life, i.e. of everything about it that was arbitrary, to render it necessary and irrefragable, to approximate it to its *absolute* value. Where they were successful in this, they experienced that happiness and satisfaction which beauty of organic-vital form affords us; indeed, they knew not other beauty, and therefore we may term in their beauty. [--] To employ an audacious comparison: it is as though the instinct for the ‘thing-in-itself’ were most powerful in primitive man. Increasing spiritual mastery of the outside world and habituation to it mean a blunting and dimming of this instinct. Only after the human spirit has passed, in thousand of years of its evolution, along the whole course of rationalistic cognition, does the feeling for the ‘thing in itself’ re-awaken in it as the final resignation of knowledge. That which was previously instinct is now the ultimate product of cognition. Having slipped down from the pride of knowledge, man is now just as lost and helpless vis-à-vis the world-picture as primitive man, once he has recognized that ‘this visible world in which we are is the work of Maya, brought forth by magic, a transitory and in itself unsubstantial semblance, comparable to the optical illusion and the dream, of which it is equally false and equally true to say that it is, as that it is not’ (Schopenhauer, *Kritik der Kantischen Philosophie*). [--] In the urge to abstraction the intensity of the self-alienative impulse is...not characterized, as in the

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<sup>230</sup> Ibid., pp. 69–70. The italics are mine in order to highlight the important terms that also Asaf’ev used in his writings.

<sup>231</sup> Ibid.

need for empathy, by an urge to alienate oneself from individual being, but as an urge to seek deliverance from the tortuousness of humanity as a whole, from the seeming arbitrariness of organic existence in general, in the contemplation of something necessary and irrefragable. Life as such is felt to be a disturbance of aesthetic enjoyment. [--] Popular usage speaks with striking accuracy of ‘loosing oneself’ in the contemplation of a work of art. In this sense, therefore, it cannot appear over-bold to attribute all aesthetic enjoyment – and perhaps even every aspect of the human sensation of happiness – to the impulse of self-alienation as its most profound and ultimate essence.<sup>232</sup>

Worringer’s concepts were a symptom of a growing anthropological aspect of the modernists and an interest to abstract art. Asaf’ev interprets the theories of Worringer and Lipps theories in his “etude” about the *Kiteže*. He discusses the psychological basis of the formation of Russian aesthetics, i.e. “artistic volition” in Russian art history and development of Russian musical style. He writes:

Aesthetic enjoyment which arises as a result and in a process of perceiving *Kiteže* is founded in the given music on the basis of the harmonic reunification of two eternally struggling tendencies of one’s “artistic volition”: process of exposing artistic ideas/concepts into the schematic-abstract forms, and – into the natural-concrete organic forms. The first process, in its highest spiritual form, appears in Gothic, the second – appears in the Renaissance [--]. Most likely, a peculiar interpretation of these tendencies took place in Russian art. If one takes a look to the origins of our icon painting in the Egyptian portrait art, we pass through the trial of Byzantine abstraction, the evolution of which can be constructed only upon its incessant overcoming of linear-geometric constructivity towards the creative impulses which in Lipps’ thinking approach the understanding of “empathy” (Einfühlung) and which pull towards [founding] the artistic construction on the basis of the organic world. [--] In the music and partly in creative works of Rimskij-Korsakov one can observe an extremely interesting struggle of processes: abstraction and empathy. [--] The first ones [his operas “May Night” and “A Night before Christmas”] are dominated by lyrical pafos and the process of “empathy” and the second ones [among others, the operas “Sadko” and “A Tale about Tsar Saltan”], spiritual abstraction, linear-geometrical ornament, rhythm of confronting trivialities (or sounding masses) – in short, [they are dominated by] the process that results from the struggle of artistic volition to tear out the given object from the eternally flowing instabile formation of visible world and to capture its absolute being, independent of the ties with the phenomenon of the outside world, born by causality. [Thus] [o]bjective reality – is

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<sup>232</sup> Ibid., pp. 71–72.

constructed in the circumstances of the given artistic concept on the basis of a struggle towards the abstraction and not on the basis of empathy.<sup>233</sup>

Thus Asaf'ev tries to make his contribution to Worringer's call to write about the psychological basis of art history. He clearly applies the whole theory of Worringer on explaining Russian musical tradition. Yet it needs to be mentioned that Asaf'ev clarifies on the same page in a reference that by abstraction he does not necessary imply to the process that leads to dead schemes, but rather to human's spiritual, intellectual and antropomorphic processes, which means the "personification of nature". Thus abstraction and intellectualization does not mean here for Asaf'ev the death of living and organic, to what he refers by occasion in his other works. In *Symphonic Etudes* he writes: "In "Kiteže" we feel the logic of organic process and we sense the organicity in the process of abstraction."<sup>234</sup>

Reflections of Lipps's theory can be found in Asaf'ev's understanding of a special role of the audience in the formation of aesthetics, and also in his musicological views. In his later production Asaf'ev emphasizes that there are no special forms of beauty, but that the laws in making art and conceptions of beauty become formed dialectically between the composer and the society so that every epoch has its own preferences. The core of Asaf'ev's thought is how to comprehend (or empathy) art if it doesn't arise from people's life or from the life generally. He writes that music always reflects society and vice versa<sup>235</sup>. Thus Lipps' theory on Asaf'ev's later production can be interpreted so that society (an individual in Lipps) projects itself (empathy) into art and sees beauty in things that are most familiar to it. The influence of the theory of Lipps and Worringer will be discussed further in the Chapter on *Symphonic Etudes* (see Chapter 4.3).

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<sup>233</sup> Asaf'ev: *Simf.E* 1970, pp. 103–104.

<sup>234</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 105.

<sup>235</sup> See the Chapter on *Intonation*.

### 4.1.3 The Intuitive Philosophy of Henri Bergson and Nikolaj Losskij

At the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century Russian literary and philosophical circles were in a crisis with the Realist tradition and the mechanistic rational world-view. A special place was given to intuitive philosophy and especially to the philosophy of the French philosopher Henri Bergson, whose theories were propagandized in Russia by Nikolaj Losskij.<sup>236</sup> The identification of art with *intuition* was to be given a philosophical exposition in the aesthetics of Italian idealist philosopher Benedetto Croce (1866–1952).<sup>237</sup> Croce made the same kind of distinction between intellectual (conceptual) knowledge and intuitive or sensuous knowledge as Henri Bergson but in a different way. Whereas for Croce intuition was some kind of an elementary knowledge, comparable with a dream and a production of an image related to art and to universality, for Bergson it was an immediate “artistic” contemplation of reality in its ceaseless flow or duration, reaching the very essential of an object. In comparison with Croce, Bergson’s intuition possessed wider meaning as a perception and a special source of knowledge. Both philosophers considered an artwork highly individual.

Bergson developed his intuitive philosophy on the basis of dualistic approach to time, with portions devoted to the processes of evolution, cognition, and the study of personality<sup>238</sup>. Bergson was against the mechanistic model that, according to him,

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<sup>236</sup> Bergson’s philosophical monographs: *Essai sur les données immédiates de la conscience* (1889), *Matière et mémoire* (1896) *L’Evolution créatrice* and *Introduction à la métaphysique* (1903) were translated into Russian by 1922. (See Haas 1998, p. 56.)

<sup>237</sup> According to him, art is to be identified with vision or intuition i.e., spiritual rather than with any physical object or range of objects. The artist produces an image or picture and the perceiver of art reproduces in himself the artist’s image. Intuition means for him ‘vision’, ‘contemplation’, ‘imagination’, ‘fancy’, ‘invention’, ‘representation’ and so forth, “which continuously reappear as almost synonymous in discussion on art. All of them give rise in our minds to the same set of concepts – a sign of universal consent”. Croce claims that the answer “art is intuition, acquires significance as well as strength from all that it implicitly denies and from which art is distinguished.” Those denials are for example a denial that art is a physical fact, that it is not a utilitarian act and that it cannot be pleasurable or a moral act. Furthermore the definition of art as intuition goes the denial that it has the character of *conceptual knowledge*. “Conceptual knowledge in its pure form (which is that of the philosophical) is always oriented toward reality and aims to establish the real as distinguished from the unreal, or to diminish unreality in status by including it within reality as a subordinate part of itself. In contrast, intuition refers precisely to the lack of distinction between reality and unreality – to the image itself – with its purely ideal status as mere image.” (Harrison & Wood eds. 1992, p. 14; Croce is quoted in Harrison & Wood eds. 1992, pp. 108–110; Reader 1979, p. 11.)

<sup>238</sup> For Bergson, time can be known in two ways: 1. through and act of the imagination, it can be solidified, subdivided, and conceptualized as if fixed in space; or 2. through intuition, i.e. the simple awareness of

distorted the phenomena of continuity, gradual change, and growth. He presented a series of metaphors that he wished they could lead to an intuition of a process in question.<sup>239</sup> This style was typical for symbolists and also to Asaf'ev. The followers of Bergson opposed Kant's assertion of "impossibility of metaphysics"<sup>240</sup>, that it was impossible to gain objective knowledge about the external "thing-in-itself" because the observer's knowledge about the object was bound to the observer and that this type of knowledge fell in the category of faith. Moreover especially Russian thinkers trusted human's ability to grasp the absolute knowledge through other faculties of perception and thus emphasized "human's creative side".<sup>241</sup> Bergson stated that the absolute knowledge is achieved only through intuition, "through the active sympathy with the object of knowledge by which it is possible to enter into the fluid reality of the thing itself."<sup>242</sup>

Bergson's most famous follower in Russia was Nikolaj Losskij, a philosopher who emigrated from Russia in 1922. Among his works were a study *Obosnovanie Intuitivizma* (The Intuitive Basis of Knowledge) (1906); a study on Bergson's intuitive philosophy *Intuitivnaja filosofija Bergsona* (The Intuitive Philosophy of Bergson) (1914) and *Mir kak organičeskoe celoe* (World as an Organic Whole) (1915) which Asaf'ev quoted in his book *Symphonic Etudes*. Losskij's own intuitive philosophy differed from Bergson's in that it did not deny the share of intellect in the process of reaching the absolute knowledge<sup>243</sup>. Losskij's ideas were also more religious than those of Bergson, as Hillary Fink has emphasized: "Whereas Bergson claims that 'life in its entirety, regarded as a creative evolution [--] transcends finality, if we understand by finality the realization of an idea conceived or conceivable in advance', Losskii's 'creative evolution' is informed by the preconceived idea of the Kingdom of God as the final goal toward which all evolution is oriented."<sup>244</sup> Below I quote Fink, since she has

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the self's passage through time can lead to an intuition of the continuous flow of time. (Haas 1998, p. 57–58.)

<sup>239</sup> Ibid.

<sup>240</sup> What he considered to be a "scientific proof" was beyond the realm of science.

<sup>241</sup> Fink 1999, pp. 7–9.

<sup>242</sup> Ibid., p. 28; Fink has quoted Bergson's *Introduction à la métaphysique*, p. 29.

<sup>243</sup> Frolova 2001, p. 298.

<sup>244</sup> Fink 1999, p. 30.

condensed Losskij's philosophy well in her book *Bergson and Russian Modernism 1900–1930* (1999):

Losskii's philosophy is based on two interrelated theories: "epistemological coordination" (*gnoseologicheskaia koordinatsiia*) and intuitivism, the latter made possible by the former. Epistemological coordination represents for Loskii the process by which the "I" substantial agent (or simply the cognizing subject) becomes unified with the substance of "non-I" (or the object of knowledge) as parts of the same organic whole of existence. Losskii opposes this latter concept to the Western tradition of epistemological individualism or subordination established by Cartesian rationalism and continued up through Kantian critical philosophy, according to which the subject can never truly know the "thing-in-itself", and the object is thus subordinated to the knowing subject. According to Losskii, the meaning of the external world is not determined by the knowing subject's impressions but rather but rather depends on the "coordination" of subject and object resulting from the closing of the gap between them. Losskii's theory of intuitivism, then reflects both the immanence of the "thing-in-itself" in knowledge as well as the general organic interconnectedness (*konsubstantsial'nost'*) of the "human I" (*chelovecheskoe ia*) with all the other substantial agents in the world.<sup>245</sup>

According to Losskij, the newest philosophy (his own philosophy) is able to coordinate the universalism of Greek philosophy with the individualism of the "new" philosophy (Kant's philosophy) in order to reach an organic higher level of understanding of the world<sup>246</sup>. Losskij announced himself of being a supporter and a follower of Bergson's philosophy, but criticized his dualistic theory of knowledge that was divided into intuitive and rationalistic<sup>247</sup>.

In his study *The Intuitive Philosophy of Bergson*, Losskij presented Bergson's criticism towards the mechanistic worldview as well as his famous example of experience of

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<sup>245</sup> Ibid.

<sup>246</sup> Ibid., p. 32.

<sup>247</sup> According to Bergson, there are two profound aspects of knowledge: rational and intuitive. Rational knowledge derives from the comparison between the object and other objects, formulating a general law out of them, which is followed by an analysis, formed of the general open ideas. A general idea is an impersonal aspect of an object. It lacks its individual characteristics. The object contains always more or less behaviour that gives it broader capacity. [--] This kind of understanding can not serve as an expression of vital reality. It does not express living reality. It can only function more or less as its symbol. Because it does not express object individually, we have to recreate the junction between our mind and the object. We combine the multitude of ideas into one group. However, this kind of inspection of general ideas between themselves cannot ever produce a total object of the living reality. In fact living reality is always something inseparably total, fluid and creatively changing. (Losskij 1914, pp. 6–7.)

motion<sup>248</sup>. Losskij wrote that according to Bergson the general idea-thinking was not capable of reaching the reality which was possible to explain with an example of experience of motion:

We are able to experience in ourselves a line of movement in space (trajectory) and successive momentarily states of the body in its different points. In the speed of the motion we can sense the comparison of spaces in the final points where our body will be located per second.<sup>249</sup>

According to Bergson, we cannot get objective knowledge from the character of motion, because we are unable to reach its appearance by any other means than through the comparison of points. The totality of its essence through the intelligence can be understood only as a totality of proportions in space. The Mechanistic worldview is thus a product of intelligence.<sup>250</sup>

On the contrary to Mechanistic worldview, Bergson's comprehension of the world is continuous indivisible flow where the past maintains in the present and cannot be separated from the present as a result of indivisibility of change. This kind of continuity and indivisibility increases worlds' flow's progressive and creative character and vital tendency. The characteristics of the flow of life, "the most essential aspect of time: its ceaseless enduring"<sup>251</sup> Bergson expresses by a term *la durée*. According to Bergson *la durée* can not be known or sensed through the intelligence. *Durée* is translated in Russian by one of his translators as "duration" (*dlitel'nost*) and by others as "length" (*dlenie*). However, according to Losskij, these translations "don't remind of the understanding which is dear to Bergson", and that is why he decides to translate the term *durée* as "creative change" (*tvorčeskoe izmenenie*) or "creative tendency" (*tvorčeskoe tečenie*).<sup>252</sup>

Losskij writes that Bergson values knowledge of intelligence in the same way as pragmatists. To him knowledge of intelligence is not knowledge about the reality, it

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<sup>248</sup> Losskij 1914, p. 9.

<sup>249</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 7.

<sup>250</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 9.

<sup>251</sup> This is Haas' expression (1998, p. 57).

<sup>252</sup> Losskij 1914, pp. 13–14.

does not result the absolute truth about the content of things. It possesses only relative knowledge and symbolic character. Thus Bergson reacts negatively towards the teleological view. Nevertheless, he gives a high valuation to intellectual knowledge in the sphere of practical reality. Bergson states that besides positive knowledge there is yet absolute knowledge, which is attainable through intuition.<sup>253</sup> Intuition can fulfil those assignments that intelligence can not. It is peculiar intellectual sympathy “by means of which we penetrate the inner of the object” to be able to pour together its individuality, consequently inexpressible in general understandings of the environment, and to comprehend it as a personal being.<sup>254</sup> Losskij writes that according to Bergson

[t]he intuitive knowledge attains the cognizable object immediately as a whole and thus the different indivisible sides of an object appear as a basis of the whole and from the whole. Secondly, the intuitive knowledge is the contemplation of the very things to their genuine content and thus it possesses an absolute character, meanwhile the rational knowledge consists of symbols and consequently, possesses a relative character. Thirdly, the intuitive knowledge gives at once the whole endless richness of the content of an object, meanwhile rational knowledge only wants to exhaust the object, forcing one to build an endless line of general understandings that are connected to each other. Naturally, it is clear that this kind of line never remains complete.<sup>255</sup>

Finally and fourth of all, Bergson states that the creative changeability (*la durée*), the instability of reality, is given in intuition, whereas the general knowledge is achieved through the rational knowledge which is considered to be only static, general state of objects. The assignment of intuition is thus to reach the most ‘doing’ of object. In order our consciousness to coincide with an object in its being, it is required that it looks aside from the readiness (*tout fait*) and concentrate upon what is being created (*se faisant*). “We use intuition first of all for penetration to the hiding-place of our ego, our personality, and we discover that with a help of it we can open the most important questions of philosophy of mind, for example question about free will, which reminds eternal puzzle for intelligence.”<sup>256</sup>

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<sup>253</sup> Ibid.

<sup>254</sup> Ibid., pp. 17–18.

<sup>255</sup> Ibid.

<sup>256</sup> Ibid., pp. 18–19.

In his critic Losskij writes that on the contrary to Bergson's dualistic approach on knowledge, his own theory is monistic in the sense that he considers all forms of knowledge to be intuitive<sup>257</sup>. Losskij claims that Bergson is wrong: there is no abyss between intuition and intellect since intellect itself is intuitive. As Fink has pointed out, "Losskij believes in the 'connectedness, rationality, logos ([*Mir kak organičeskoe celoe*] 1917, [p.] 53) of the world wherein even the intellect's symbolic knowledge partakes of the unity of the absolute and is therefore intuitive in nature."<sup>258</sup>

Losskij worked as a professor of philosophy at the St. Petersburg University at the time when Asaf'ev studied there. Asaf'ev became deeply interested in the intuitive philosophy and wrote:

Familiarity with contemporary philosophy and, I won't hide it, a certain predilection for Bergson – and in Russia, for Losskij – has convinced me all the more, that, now as never before, the human mind is approaching the spirit of music (reproduction or creation in sound); and if philosophers and the many great men of modern science were musicians, their expectations would be intuitively confirmed for them and they would sense to be fully animate that which they construe to be so by means of intellectual hypothesis.<sup>259</sup>

The quotation from Asaf'ev's letter to an unknown address (21.7.1922) shows a kind of naïve enthusiasm towards the Bergsonian philosophy and reveals the influence of the Silver Age and Romantic ideals of the special essence and ability of music. In *Symphonic Etudes* (1922) Asaf'ev wrote:

Philosophical movements grow and flourish stubbornly basing their worldview in the study of *intuition*, in direct perception, a contrasting discursive knowledge of a phenomenon. Needless to say, it is clear that art, understood as a creative activity, organic and involuntary, directed to a single and indivisible creation which in its own correlation of concrete figures, superincumbent on perceptible ideas, should have been found in the studies of significance a meaning and a value of intuitive thinking, a reliable point of basis against the hegemony of utilitarian materialism and rationalism. And in return – intuition, as a controversial intellect and vital knowledge – compared to a dead

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<sup>257</sup> Losskij, Nikolaj. *Istorija russskoj filosofii*. Moscow: Progress 1994, p. 399–400; quoted in Fink 1999, p. 34.

<sup>258</sup> Ibid.

<sup>259</sup> This is quoted by Haas 1998, pp. 56, 236.

abstraction, searches an integral synthetic function of art based on its own aspiration. Music as the most intuitive art, closest of all to mental life and direct sources of life, possessing growing and besides that, more flexible substance, because it is deformed and unfolds in time (in which connection, thicken with sounds in time which means, in time, organizing the very music into a moment, flow and into a period of its sounding) – music, without doubts, has to rule over consciousness of modern humanity and apply its influence to all spheres of other ramifications of art. This influence is easy to observe by all who are familiar with recent tendencies in modern poetry and painting [--].<sup>260</sup>

David Haas has claimed that the influence of the fundamental thesis of Bergson's metaphysics on Asaf'ev is evident in the articles written during the period 1916–1922. Haas has noted that Asaf'ev had similar view with Bergson on the nature of consciousness and that he as well believed that the fundamental aspect of one's comprehension of reality is subjective, that the motion of reality (*la durée*) could only be perceived intuitively. Asaf'ev applied Bergson's theory to a perception of music by hearing what he held superior to a mere visual experience of a score, incapable of giving the whole of music. Another important adoption by Asaf'ev was his understanding of reality under a continuous change. It inspired him in his comprehension of a musical form as a process.<sup>261</sup> Musical form was to Asaf'ev a totality that was in motion (*la durée*) and was perceived by hearing (comprehended intuitively by the listener). However, in his comprehension Asaf'ev fused also Lipps' concept of emphatic projection.

The auditory experience/perception was most important to Asaf'ev in observing music. It can be identified with the intuitive experience/perception so that 1. it is subjective i.e., it happens in the consciousness of an individual; 2. it reaches something about the musical process and about the composers's form-thinking that can not be (according to Asaf'ev) reached through mere visual intellectual perception, i.e. through reading the score. Asaf'ev's interpretation includes also a hidden idea insisting that the perceiver of the music has to be as creative and intelligent as the composer in order to comprehend the music i.e., to recreate it in one's consciousness. As Haas has written:

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<sup>260</sup> Asaf'ev: *Simf.E* 1970, p. 201. The italics are mine.

<sup>261</sup> Haas 1998, pp. 58–60.

According to Asaf'ev, to perceive a work properly means to recreate fundamental aspects of the original act of composition, i.e., the organization of sounds in time. But this recreation cannot be limited to the analyzing intellect. If a musical work is indeed the result of intellect, feeling and will, the proper understanding of the work demands the use of intuition in the Bergsonian sense, since neither feeling nor will can be entirely translated into concepts but depend, in part, on experimental, intuitive knowledge.<sup>262</sup>

Asaf'ev was influenced by the notion of Bergson (and the notion of modernists in general) of a “living reality”, a constant change of reality and that a mere intellectual perception cannot attain the individuality of an object. He founded his premises of art to this constant change and living reality. His view of art as living led to a conclusion that no ideal abstract schemes exist, i.e. there is no absolute recipe for beauty. Asaf'ev was clearly against pure rational scheme. He stated that composers who follow mere ossified musico-theoretical laws destroy the living and developing quality of art<sup>263</sup>. Mere studying of musical cores leads to “academicism” which is not capable of attaining the living quality of art and a genuine artistic experience. Nevertheless, Asaf'ev's presentations were contradictory. His rational emphasis grew during the years on the way towards the socialist realist aesthetics, since “mysticism” was condemnable from the point of view of the materialists. Following thus more Losskij's view Asaf'ev emphasized already in his early writings that both intuitive and rationalistic aspects are important qualities in doing creative work. As on Losskij, they formed in his concept an organic unity.

According to Asaf'ev, also music-theoretical terminology needed to be fixed along with the development of musical culture.<sup>264</sup> Thus the notion of the living and developmental character of reality is important also with respect of Asaf'ev's terminological development. He fixed his terminological explanations all the time and developed them further in his works. The notion of living reality is important also in order to understand the procedural nature of Asaf'ev's terminology. Terms such as *sinfonizm* reflected his

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<sup>262</sup> Ibid., p. 63.

<sup>263</sup> Asaf'ev: *Muz.Form.* 1971, pp. 22–23.

<sup>264</sup> Ibid., pp. 195, 196–197. This was written during 1925–1926 and given as a report at one of the congresses for the retraining of instructors of music technicum [school].

understanding of the movement or a qualitative change of an organic whole, by which he meant musical form. He wrote:

Thus simfonizm is sensed as a growth of sounding energy in a moment of fixation in one's mind in the sphere of sounding. Originating in musical being: in its duration [dlitel'nost'], its intensity [naprjažennost'] (objective features of sounding content) and in its psychology (in essence: psychism), which means, passing every sounding image through a prism of experienced sensation, captured and deliberated in the spiritual life, it is possible to confirm: one finds simfonizm when there is continuously maintained a higher ascertained formula of musical dynamism. However, not only quantitatively or in its formal abstract-sounding state, but in a qualitative intensive-psychical [state]: when every passed edge is registered by oneself as characterically different in its inner tension from the preceding condition. [It is that moment] when we perceive a sensation of a continuous musical current and its pulling forward tendency.<sup>265</sup>

However, Asaf'ev's presentations of the ideas of Bergson or Losskij were far from being conclusive. They were mixed into some kind of a sythesis. As it is noted earlier, Asaf'ev did not worry too much of being a precise follower of one philosophical system. I shall discuss about Bergson's influence on Asaf'ev yet in the Chapters 4.2.1 and 4.2.3 where I present some practical examples.

#### **4.2 The Early Articles and the Development of Asaf'ev's Musical Language**

Asaf'ev's early articles published in *Melos, Knigi o muzyke* (Books about Music), "Puti v buduščee" (Pathways into the Future<sup>266</sup>) (1917) and "Soblazny i preodolenija" (Temptations and triumphs) (1918) brought already forth characteristics of his "mature" works. As Orlova has rightfully noted, these articles, deeply influenced by the ideas of 19<sup>th</sup> century critical tradition of Stasov and Serov, Symbolist terminology, idealist philosophy and the ideas of Bergson, contain a valuable core of Asaf'ev's aesthetical thought. She has also emphasized an important feature: the articles stress historical

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<sup>265</sup> Asaf'ev [1921] 1981, p. 97.

<sup>266</sup> An English translation of the article can be found in Campbell (Asaf'ev) 2003, pp. 234–258.

continuity.<sup>267</sup> In order to understand basics of Asaf'ev's ideas in concrete sense, it is useful to take a closer look at his article "Pathways into the Future".

Asaf'ev approaches Russian musical current from the past and goes through its European roots and the heritage of Russian intelligentsia. As a result, he sets a question: "Where is the face of our music" and what are the pathways into the future?<sup>268</sup> According to him, despite the big influence of German music, Russian classical music contains certain Russian peculiarities. For instance, how the ancient folksong, with a combination of Western norms, has resulted in the so-called dilettante-Russian style, beloved of all Russian composers? Asaf'ev formulations bring forth language typical to his later works he sates: "the element of *melos* infected the pale schemes [meaning Western methods] with its vital impulse and created seductive mirages of genuine folk art (Rimskij-Korsakov's *Kitež*, Borodin's *Prince Igor* and Ljadov's *Kikimora*)."<sup>269</sup>

Asaf'ev's classification of Russian composers expressed in the article is very interesting. For example Čajkovskij and Musorgskij are, according to him, the only composers who cannot be reproved for adopting a false approach to folksong. Asaf'ev takes a closer look at the individual Russian composers and speculates the possible pathways leading from them to the future. He evaluates the total creativity of individual composers, not just their works or style, but their whole artistic attitude, psychological aspects: their creative personality. Roughly speaking, Asaf'ev divides composers into two categories: subjective and objective, which he calls different degrees of *psychologism*.<sup>270</sup> By this he means that the utmost objectivity leads to psychological indifference<sup>271</sup> while the extreme subjectivity leads to egoism.<sup>272</sup> Although Bergson's

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<sup>267</sup> Biography 1984, p. 86.

<sup>268</sup> Asaf'ev: Pathways 2003, p. 236.

<sup>269</sup> Ibid., p. 238.

<sup>270</sup> "[w]ith regard to the content of musical consciousness, which take shape as the course of a single creative process, but in which at times the personal state of soul is predominant (that means, the creative impulses are rooted in the egoism of the composer, in his mental states), and in other times they are reflection of perceptions introduced from outside, from the sphere of the super-human world." (Ibid., p. 242.)

<sup>271</sup> "From there arises a perception of the cosmos as static, which schematizes everything on one plane and accepts even the spiritual quality itself (the upsurge of life) at the stage of motionless concentration. Composers with this cast of creative thought are usually inclined to make music geometrical." (Ibid., p. 246.)

<sup>272</sup> See *ibid.*

qualities “rational and intuitive” and those of Asaf’ev “subjective and objective” are not terminologically parallel, their meaning is analogous. Bergson’s rationality leads towards “impersonality” whereas Asaf’ev’s objective qualities of a composer lead to “psychological indifference”.

On Asaf’ev’s scale Čajkovskij is considered a more subjective composer than Musorgskij, and Musorgskij more subjective than Glazunov or Rimskij-Korsakov who are classified as ‘objective observers’. As a result Asaf’ev concludes: The pathway leading from for example Čajkovskij must not be seen in his epigones, such as Arenskij, “but in places where there is not a single particle of external imitation or even similarity of creative nature [--]” but rather, similar to him

in the degree of their exertion of the creative impulse both in profundity and continuity of immersion in the genuine element of music. But one does not wish to await the rebirth of that emotional quality which is valuable in him, but pitiful among his followers. For that reason the pathway from Čajkovskij lies in surmounting the infectious element – a personal peculiarity of him – and deepening and strengthening the element of subjectivity as a whole.<sup>273</sup>

Shortly, Asaf’ev holds that the pathway leading from the Russian classics is not an imitation but more or less consists of psychological qualities: creative spirit and special features on the scale of subjectivity–objectivity. As an example of this he grounds and claims Mjaskovskij of being a kind of spiritual heir of Čajkovskij and Prokof’ev of being an heir of Skrjabin.

Asaf’ev’s article reveals the close ties to the second generation of Symbolists. He talks about “mystical qualities” and uses expressions as “creative/vital impulse”, “superhuman”, etc. Asaf’ev’s evaluation of Skrjabin’s creativity illustrates clearly his attitude to the Symbolist movement:

“Čajkovskij had no choice but to die – if not physically, then creatively – after his contact with the ultimate boundary (accessible to our intuition) of perception of the superhuman [--] Whereas Čajkovskij could not release himself his whole life long from the sphere of

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<sup>273</sup> Ibid., pp. 243–244.

consciousness inherent in the ordinary human being, Scriabin apparently surmounted the barriers of human consciousness and often touched and grasped [--] the sphere of the superhuman, without sensing the corporeality and the terror of death associated with it [--] Scriabin does not draw us anywhere, does not call us [--] He resides and drawing on incredible power, forces the listener to transfer into the same kind of trance. And he has achieved these conditions very easily: he has somehow not noticed concrete life and not sensed that he is outside it or outside its immanent norms. And abiding in religious zeal, he could go down to hell, touch the abominations of depravity and nevertheless remain in 'ecstasy', in a static sojourn, in blindness. Scriabin's sphere of sound can most accurately be described as a poem-like quality woven from desires to be lost in ecstasy (by means of narcotics – even if only of a spiritual order of course) and from a sojourn in it. Scriabin has no will of his own, and therefore there is no symphonism, no continuity of musical consciousness, though there is all the same an impersonal, insane dissolution in the sphere which to *him* is concrete and ideal. The phenomenon of Scriabin is a historic wonder [--]"<sup>274</sup>

The concept of *poetic quality* in music is here quite obscure. Anyhow, it appears on Asaf'ev many times also in his later texts. When Asaf'ev talks about Scriabin's "'distinctive objectivism' of acceptance of a supra-personal inspiration", he emphasizes Scriabin's poetic quality in music. According to Asaf'ev, Scriabin's music does not contain *simfonizm*, because he has given up his personal will. Scriabin's musical inheritance can lead in the direction of turning this poetic quality of his into *simfonizm*, which means a return to the dominance of personal elements asserting one's own will far above anything else.<sup>275</sup> Thus poetic quality has something to do with the supernatural powers, which dominates the artist whereas *simfonizm* is something more intellectual created in one's subjective consciousness. Here one asks where the intuition stands. However yet in his later work *Musical Form as a Process* (1930) Asaf'ev talks about poetic images, but there he refers to the figurative content of music. His tone has gone over all into more formal direction and he defines his concepts more precise. Also his attitude towards the musical symbolism has changed (see the Chapter 5.1).

Asaf'ev explains that the true *simfonizm* is a continuity of musical consciousness, each given moment of which are being derived from the preceding one. It can never be only a

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<sup>274</sup> Ibid., pp. 240–241.

<sup>275</sup> See Ibid., p. 249.

copy of the foregoing one, just as it cannot be uncoupled from it.<sup>276</sup> This definition is similar to what he presented in his 1917 article<sup>277</sup>: "the essence of simfonizm lies in the ceaseless stratification of a qualitative element of dissimilitude and novelty" and also in his already mentioned 1921 article "O simfonizme"<sup>278</sup> where he states: "Simfonizm can be sensed when there is a continual stratification of qualitative element of *otherness* (*inakost'*), novelties of perceptions as far as in the growth of sounding and not only in a confirmation of earlier proved conditions."

Asaf'ev's other important theoretical concepts such as *melos*, *intonation* [*intonatsija*] and *form* are defined in the article in the following way: melos (especially melos in Russian folk-songs) is an uninterrupted melodic fluidity, the element of song. The fundamental element in Russian and in the West-European music is "a sense of a way of the creation of abstractly spatial constructions or poetic ideas defined by landmarks. It flows in the direction of song, melodic and harmonic cell (intonation) and instrumental metre, which are woven together."<sup>279</sup>

Asaf'ev's definition of a *form* should be comprehended as a synthesis. As something that is in Mjaskovskij's music "intended to hold in check within its limits the pressure of an irrepressible element which sometimes bends and twists these limits, and sometimes submissively give in to them". Asaf'ev admits that these attempts are sometimes futile, for sonata form is not flexible and will not withstand individual violations.<sup>280</sup> Thus for Asaf'ev, form is not tied into stiff schemes or strict dogmas, but it is rather living and flexible. However, his later emphasis on its procedural nature is not yet highlighted in this article. Asaf'ev's thinking of *free forms* culminates into a slander towards academism, *Glazunovizm* (axe: Borodin–Belajevites'–Glazunov, Witold Malyševskij (1873-1939), Štejnberg, Hvostoščinskij): "The outermost limit of this school of 'objectivists' is reached in the compositions of Glazunov which are so perfectly

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<sup>276</sup> See *Ibid.*, pp. 245, 248.

<sup>277</sup> Glebov, Igor (Boris Asaf'ev). "Soblazny i preodoleniia." (Temptations and triumphs.) In *Melos: Knigi o musike*. [Melos: Books about music]. (Glebov, Igor and Suvchniskii, Pjotr, eds.) vol. 1. St. Petersburg, 1917, p. 6. This is first quoted by *Biography* 1984, pp. 86–87 and later translated in English by Haas 1998, p. 55 without any references to *Biography*.

<sup>278</sup> Asaf'ev [1921] 1981, p. 96.

<sup>279</sup> Asaf'ev: *Pathways* 2003, p. 237.

<sup>280</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 245.

orthodox that one may even question whether the source of this outlook on the world of sound is indeed creativity.”<sup>281</sup> Thus Glazunov had every right to be upset in 1928 of Asaf’ev’s domination at halls of the St. Petersburg Conservatory. However, despite that Asaf’ev’s writings were insulting; his attitude towards Glazunov personally was not at all that negative.<sup>282</sup>

The article draws a picture of Asaf’ev’s aesthetical vision and terminology. To Asaf’ev art is an organism and every organism has a face, countenance, and image and character. Following the symbolists he states that among the arts, music is the most lively and real. As usual, Asaf’ev’s theoretical concepts are not well specified. He does not go into the sphere of musical theory (which he actually never really did in his other works either) and leaves many conventionally music-theoretical concepts open for free interpretations.<sup>283</sup> Despite his polemical tendencies, terminological obscurities and clear adoption of terminology from the aesthetical trends of the era, his implementation of the language of the Symbolists into the sphere of musicology brings some new and interesting insights. His remarks on composer’s creative qualities are interesting if not scientifically, then artistically. Especially original and fresh in Russian musicological writing was his penetration to composer’s psychology, his musical thinking and how his personal world-view as well as his creative personality can be observed in his works. In this, as mentioned, he follows Worringer’s call. The logic of Asaf’ev’s thought is quite well constructed and not at all as obscure as Orlova has claimed.

### 4.3 *Symphonic Etudes*

The book *Symphonic Etudes* was finished in 1921 and its first edition appeared in 1922 under Asaf’ev’s penname Igor’ Glebov<sup>284</sup>. In her preface Orlova values the book as one of the best and most original phenomenon in Asaf’ev’s literary production, a

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<sup>281</sup> Ibid., p. 246–247.

<sup>282</sup> Glazunov’s attitude towards Asaf’ev’s domination at the Conservatory is discussed in more detail on the p. 42 in this work.

<sup>283</sup> For example, lyrical music, dramatic music and tragic music are for Asaf’ev only degrees of intensity within a single element. See the footnote in *ibid.*, p. 247.

<sup>284</sup> Asaf’ev: *Simf.E* 1970, p. 248.

borderline case which was a synthesis of his critics of the past decades, but which also opened up new perspectives to the future music historical and theoretical research. As she has stated Asaf'ev's analyses Russian operas through the aspect of *simfonizm* and *melos* that he considers as aesthetical categories arising from the "fixed points" of style and musical thinking of different composers. In *Symphonic Etudes* Asaf'ev already introduces also the questions of procedural features of musical form thus setting out the basics of his book *Musical Form as a Process*.<sup>285</sup>

*Symphonic Etudes* is a collection of articles that Asaf'ev wrote to the journals *Muzyka* [Music] and *Žizn' iskusstva* [Life of Art]. They were inspired by the concrete spectacles of Petrograd theatres. Asaf'ev writes that his intention was to write justifications for the enormous and artistically valuable legacy of Russian opera which was totally underestimated at the time. According to him the book is about Russian theatrical music "in relation with its musical nature, its originality in realization of means and its philosophical meaning". The theoretical background of the *Etudes* was originated in his lecture serie "Constructing psychological basics of style of Russian music" and especially in his big summary lecture of "The basics of Russian opera style".<sup>286</sup> He attempts to put Russian operas into world context, and indicate and explain their cultural peculiarities. In doing so Asaf'ev tries to awaken a feeling about a living Russian musical tradition that continues in the musical works of Stravinsky and Prokof'ev. The sharp speculative aspect to Russian musical history makes *Symphonic Etudes* as well as his *Book about Stravinsky* (1929)<sup>287</sup> outstanding in relation to its time period.

#### 4.3.1 Sythesis

Asaf'ev's analyses in *Symphonic Etudes* are not strict technical analyses but rather he again follows Worringer's call and talks about psychological aspects that are related to

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<sup>285</sup> Ibid., pp. 3, 5.

<sup>286</sup> Ibid., pp. 248–249.

<sup>287</sup> See the next Chapter.

Russian operas. He concentrates on different types of creative personalities and worldviews in Russian operatic world.

Another important aspect is methodological. Asaf'ev questions the traditional means of analysing music. According to him, research needs to be conducted in respect to the peculiarities of the object and not according to some past trends. This trait connects him in a sense to the Russian Formalist scholars. In his analysis he tries to re-evaluate the Russian musical past and to indicate new perspectives for the musicological study. Within that Asaf'ev already grounds his study on different composers such as Glinka. Glinka remained dear to Asaf'ev throughout his career. However his monography on Glinka was not published until in 1947. In it, Asaf'ev presents an extensive analysis on Glinka's opera *Ruslan and Ljudmila*<sup>288</sup>.

In *Symphonic Etudes* Asaf'ev states that for example Glinka was a genius musician but not as big thinker and philosopher as Wagner who was able to reflect enormous ideological constructions. For that reason, many people have disappointed to Glinka's diaries since his ideas are not as big as his music. However, Asaf'ev notes that the grandiosity of Glinka's music is not tied to his diaries but to life.<sup>289</sup> He concludes that in order to understand the setting of *Ruslan and Ljudmila* one must be precise when dealing with the music and the people (Glinka's contemporaries) of time period i.e., reconstruct the Russian musical way of life in detail<sup>290</sup>. Asaf'ev writes that Glinka's grandiosity is attainable through *an empathy* with his music and sensible through *an intuition*<sup>291</sup>. Thus in his study Asaf'ev fuses the concepts of Lipps and Losskij/Bergson concepts on music. He states:

One can compile a table form calculation with a help of Glinka's diaries and letters, but the more powerful evaluation of life and beauty is totally another thing. It is hard to reach what Glinka felt and how he lived. His music is simply something that has to be trusted. It is impossible to evaluate one's life completely [...] one must believe and the one who

<sup>288</sup> See Asaf'ev, Boris V. *Glinka*. Moscow: Muzgiz, 1950.

<sup>289</sup> Asaf'ev: *Simf.E* 1970, pp. 22–23.

<sup>290</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 17.

<sup>291</sup> In order to understand Glinka's music he emphasizes importance of empathy with the psychological basis of the musical style, "penetrating into the world view of Glinka's characters (*Ibid.*, pp. 17–18). "-- we sense intuitively the greatness of the work --" (*Ibid.*, p. 24).

believe feel that it is not anymore that hard with a help of music. Indeed, one must only to believe and to feel the aromat of fragrant wine of Glinka eroticism; how the admiration grows in the soul in front of this kind of person and arises a question: Why is the deeper knowledge of life through *empathy* less significant than trough an intellect?<sup>292</sup>

After the above statement Asaf'ev's narration reaches almost a poetic level of which I present a free translation:

The music of Glinka doesn't know any kindness or wickedness, and it is created almost like in an exile from paradise, but it knows the pain and passionate expectation, extacy of voluptuousness and burning intoxication, extacy of acquirement and happy enjoyous thrill. Yet only without torture, since at large this music is bright as a clear sunny sky. The music of heart is not dark, because its blood runs through the sun; and like the blood-wine, it conceals the energy of solar radiation. Its architecture, its essence in its tangible forms is directed by the Intellect – enriched of living knowledge which originates in life, but not through the consciousness which is attained through an understanding of an abstract idea. Intellect is enriched by the understanding of harmonic proportion, which never appears on Glinka as dead schemes, because he is aware of the boundary of sun and blood...<sup>293</sup>

Here again intellect (it is strange that Asaf'ev writes intellect with a capital letter) is not considered stiff but rather more intuitive, capable of understanding the absolute. The passage follows thus Losskij's interpretation of Bergson's philosophy. Losskij's influence is notable throughout the book. And one of the most illustrative passages in order to understand Asaf'ev's aesthetical concepts and the time period in general is his quotation of Losskij's book *World as an Organic Whole* (1917) on the last page of *Symphonic Etudes*:

Originally there exists the totality, and the elements capable of existing and originating only in the system of totality. For that reason one can not explain the world as a result of apposition: A to B, to C and so on: plurality doesn't form the totality, but vice versa, it is achieved from the totality. In other words, the totality is primary to elements; absolute is to be searched uprising in the sphere of totality or rather rising above it, but by no means

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<sup>292</sup> Ibid., p. 23. The italics are mine.

<sup>293</sup> Ibid.

from the sphere of elements; elements are in every case derived and relative, which means, capable of existing only in relation with the system, as members who serve.<sup>294</sup>

This determination above is something that Asaf'ev applied to his understanding of musical form or musical composition as a totality and not as a set of individual elements. Also Asaf'ev's aesthetical categories such as *simfonizm* (as it is seen as an overall quality of something, or quality that is above the individual elements) reflects the idea of understanding an object in a first place as an organic whole, but also as a part of something. The same idea, i.e. considering the elements from the perspective of the unity, appears also in Asaf'ev's analyses on opera. However the unity of a musical work does not mean in Asaf'ev necessary musical or scenic unity; it can appear also at another level. The concept of unity appears on him through different formulation. In his analysis of Rimskij-Korsakov's opera *The Tale of the Invisible Town Kiteže* he implies to the unity through the characters of the opera and writes: "Fevron's spiritual *me* is deeply peculiar to his sincere *intuitive understanding* of the harmony and the unity of the structure of the Universe."<sup>295</sup>

#### 4.3.2 Symbolist Reflections: Music and Poetry, Art and Religion

Typical of his style, Asaf'ev explains his intentions and goals in *Symphonic Etudes* many times, in different forms and through several examples. According to him this manner is adopted from the idea of etude, and technically from the *Symphonic Etudes* of Robert Schumann:

Pro domo sua, I tell that as a musician I feel that my *Symphonic Etudes* are related to strivings of Schumann, which means construction in variation forms, through extensive symphonic development and confrontating the original theme with a contrasting theme. However, psychologically my urge returns to Šumanovskij: in his time music was spreading its wings searching support from the great contemporary literary-philosophical movement and "poetisized" its ideas with literary even fixing its form sometimes in appointed "programme". Nowadays an opposite process has started – transmission of

<sup>294</sup> Losskij, Nikolaj *Mir kak organičeskoe celoe* [World as an Organic Whole], Chapter: "Organičeskoe miroponimanie" [Organic Understanding of World], (1917) p. 7; quoted in Asaf'ev: *Simf.E* 1970, p. 253.

<sup>295</sup> Ibid., p. 102.

musical rhythm into the sphere of Logos, since from the olden times at the heart of the search of contemporary philosophy one can find peculiarities to the soul of musical origin.<sup>296</sup>

With the comparison to Šumanovskij's style, Asaf'ev explains his own "symbolist" method which fuses features and means from the sphere of literature, philosophy and music. He emphasizes:

I ask you to pay attention to a notion that art – poetry, music, painting, architecture, theater – doesn't mean the same in their essence as understanding of musical, poetic, picturesque, tragical. Since a line of poetry can be more or less musical, music can be picturesque or poetic and so on.<sup>297</sup>

It is interesting, as Fink has pointed out, that in Russian tradition words themselves are somewhat suspect because of their usual reliance on purely intellectual means of comprehension.<sup>298</sup> This feature is present also on Asaf'ev. However, together with music, and especially when put into an artistic form such as opera, they reach something that Asaf'ev admired the most. In this concept there is also the core of his theory of Intonation: to reflect the truth of life through an intoned musical sounds, which originates in Russian speech. In *Symphonic Etudes* this intoned sound means "experienced, emotionally-perceived/comprehended word" which was developed according to Asaf'ev gradually on Glinka and Dargomyžskij, and which reached its perfection in Musorgskij's music<sup>299</sup>. In this idea lays also one of the most important features of socialist realism in music.

Another trait that did descend from Symbolists to socialist realism is some kind of a "religious" attitude. However, during the socialist realism it was not directed towards some mystical world beyond or towards the Kingdom of God but towards real life. In other words, art needed to be based on people's real life and not to reach some mystical kingdom. The development from mystical attitude towards more practical attitude is inherent on Asaf'ev. In *Symphonic Etudes* the religious attitude towards art appears in

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<sup>296</sup> Ibid., p. 253.

<sup>297</sup> Ibid., p. 130.

<sup>298</sup> Fink 1999, p. 9.

<sup>299</sup> Asaf'ev: *Simf.E* 1970, p. 195.

somekind of “liturgical” interpretations of operas<sup>300</sup>. I base my point on Asaf’ev’s style with some background information.

As Fink has emphasized, Russian religious thought played an important role in Russian modernism: “to uncover new modes of artistic perception and thus to grasp an elusive reality existing beyond the bounds of the intellect alone”<sup>301</sup>. Fink has noted that “the notion of intuition as the special faculty for attaining absolute knowledge (that is perceiving the inner meaning and essence of things) lies in the heart of the Russian conception of art (beauty), perception and knowledge, all of which come together in the theology of the icon.”<sup>302</sup> Among Russian Symbolists, music was seen as the most free from images and was considered to operate more intuitively than visual arts and thus it was put higher on the hierarchy than for example architecture. Music was considered most religious among arts. Belyj wrote: “The romantics’ understanding of religion itself was musical. Having established a close connection between music and religion, the romantics associated poetry too with a kind of religious rite, and themselves with priests, dedicated to serving poetry and its teachings.”<sup>303</sup> Asaf’ev’s passages in *Symphonic Etudes* contain also references to the ideas of religion and music forming an ”alliance”:

But the kernel and the content of every religious ritual, [...] and especially the kernel and the living thought of liturgy, and therefore also theatricality lays generally much deeper: through understanding the means of dedication, through getting ready for the mystery, through power of rise and bringing the sacrifice – through leading the spirit towards the understanding of life. [In an original autograph is written yet: “But is it not this also in the sphere of art”.<sup>304</sup>] Here is the contiguity of Religion and Art: that which no one knows, but would like to embody, and that which is known, but transient, and would like to immortalize...<sup>305</sup>

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<sup>300</sup> Also Orlova has noted this in Asaf’ev: *Simf.E* 1970, p. 8.

<sup>301</sup> Fink 1999, p. 27.

<sup>302</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 8. Fink discusses Russian intuitive tradition and the Russian Orthodox religion, Intuitive perception appears especially in the debate over the worship of icons centred on the nature of icon itself. “According to iconophiles, the icon is a revelation of divine truth, not a representation; thus by contemplating the icon, the worshipper is able to enter into spiritual ‘sympathy’ with it and thereby gain immediate, non-cognitive understanding of reality in its essence.”

<sup>303</sup> Steinberg 1982, p. 13.

<sup>304</sup> Asaf’ev: *Simf.E* 1970, p. 255.

<sup>305</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 34.

Asaf'ev's way of describing music was very spiritual, based on an artistic experience. Yet he was also deeply interested in Russian religious past and different myths and rituals related to it. Within reading *Symphonic Etudes* it seems that Asaf'ev possessed both, a subjective and objective approach on his object of study and that is exactly the feature what makes it hard to interpret him. His verbal illustrations of different operas are attempts to reach something of the "magical artistic experience" that he himself subjectively, i.e. intuitively experienced when listening and exploring the operas. Although he wanted to capture the music by words he admitted that the only way to really understand is through an empathy with music. Nevertheless, Asaf'ev also tried to be an objective observer and applied the theories of Worringer, Lipps, Losskij and Ernest Cassirer. He actually even apologises in *A Book about Stravinsky* his rather passionate style and spontaneous admiration towards the music that sometimes carries him away from the scientific frames<sup>306</sup>.

#### **4.4 Asaf'ev's relationship to modern music – *A Book about Stravinsky***

Two of the main themes in Asaf'ev's production are the process of a musical composition and the development in music and musical culture. Because of his interest and writings on modern music, he was accused of formalism and modernist tendencies at the end of 1920s.<sup>307</sup> Yet as David Haas has pointed out, one cannot form a full view of Asaf'ev's modernist aesthetic by focusing solely on his *A Book about Stravinsky*, the profiles of Prokof'ev, Mjaskovskij, Berg and other representatives of modern music. His ideas and special vocabulary are introduced and explained elsewhere in a series of theoretical essays that culminate with the *Musical Form as a Process* (1930).<sup>308</sup> Nevertheless, Asaf'ev's theoretical essays are also very detached and loose without reading concrete examples. I would say that Asaf'ev's modernist ideas can be found best from his early writings about Russian classics: Musorgskij, Rimskij-Korsakov, etc.

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<sup>306</sup> See the next Chapter.

<sup>307</sup> Boris Jarustovskij has noted in the preface of the 1977 that Soviet publication that "it has been particularly remembered when Asaf'ev's book was judged from the RAPM's side and later in 30s and 40s by their offspring – amateurs oversimplifying and 'straighten' complex phenomenon of world art, and that's why none appreciated the book written in some other way." (Asaf'ev: *Stravinskij* 1977, p. 3.)

<sup>308</sup> Haas 1998, p. 54.

They contain views that were typical for Russian modernists.<sup>309</sup> However, Asaf'ev's writings on modern composers, such as Stravinskij are interesting because of the historical contradiction: they were forbidden topics on Stalin's era and yet Asaf'ev was raised on the top of the musical world. However, generally speaking, the writings on modern music share the same views and aesthetical criterion as Asaf'ev's any other writing.

Asaf'ev first conceived the idea of writing a book about Stravinskij in 1924. The text developed gradually as he wrote series of analyses about Stravinskij's music. The work was finished by 1926 and published in 1929 by Triton, a Leningrad-based publisher.<sup>310</sup> However, the book was abandoned soon after its publication. The work was ignored almost fifty years until it was noticed again.<sup>311</sup> Originally Asaf'ev wanted to write a book about contemporary music but ended up writing about Stravinskij as it's representative, analysing his works, which he regarded as a "method of perceiving the links in the chain, the separate facts that make up the total phenomenon under investigation, the separate *organic manifestations of musical art as thought*".<sup>312</sup> Asaf'ev emphasized that he wasn't interested in Stravinskij as a person, but "only in what he has done as the *creative experience*".<sup>313</sup> He saw Stravinskij as great "universalist" composer like Jean-Baptiste Lully (1632–1687), Christopher Gluck (1714–1787) and Luigi Cherubini (1760–1842). In the analyses of Stravinskij's music Asaf'ev's wanted to gain objectivity<sup>314</sup> by not letting reader to know whether the composer was known to him personally or whether he was moved by his music. "My method on the other hand", he manifested, "gives a gratifying measure of freedom, in that having insinuated myself

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<sup>309</sup> These features are specified in the Chapter which concentrates on Asaf'ev's philosophical roots.

<sup>310</sup> Asaf'ev: *Stravinsky* 1982, p. 1; Asaf'ev: *Stravinskij* 1977, p. 3. Richard F. French's English translation of the book appeared in 1982 with an introduction by Robert Craft, who worked as an assistant and amanuensis of Stravinsky. The book was published in the series *Russian Music Studies*, (No. 5. Ann Arbor, Michigan: UMI Research Press, 1982) which has, since then, published a number of interesting studies on Russian music and musicology.

<sup>311</sup> Jarustovskij writes also in 1977, that people had lately become again interested in the book and it had been cited and studied. "One of the reasons is the rising interest towards the author of *Petrushka* and *The Rite of Spring*... It is not the least influenced by Stravinsky's visit to his homeland in the beginning of the 60s. Recently he has been studied a lot and also a monograph has been published." (Asaf'ev: *Stravinskij* 1977, p. 3.) Stravinsky's visit raised unexpected emotions in Russians as well as in the composer himself.

<sup>312</sup> Asaf'ev: *Stravinsky* 1982, p. 3. The italicization is mine

<sup>313</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 5.

<sup>314</sup> Asaf'ev stated in his chapter on *Mavra* "Does the naturalist refuse to recognize a species of flora or fauna just because he does not like it?" (*Ibid.*, p. 207.)

into the subject and grasped the language and mannerisms of the composer from inside, I am able to form judgements about his work from a variety of points of view.” Asaf’ev though admitted that it was sometimes hard to avoid being polemical or to become emotionally excited when analyzing Stravinskij’s works.<sup>315</sup> It is evident: Asaf’ev’s book is full of subjective admiration which is derived from his personal tastes and emotional praise and due to the style features of the time period descending from the tradition of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century art criticism.

Asaf’ev tried to justify the modern composers he admired, particularly Stravinskij. For him Stravinskij was intuitive genius, such as Ludwig van Beethoven (1770–1827), Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756–1791) and William Shakespeare (1564–1616). According to him there are two types of techniques to create art: imitative and evolving. The latter (that represented by the above-mentioned artists) always struggles to master new methods and expressions, which sound most often foreign to the ears of the contemporaries.<sup>316</sup>

Asaf’ev also sharply criticized those who objected new music: “What they do not or cannot understand, what they do not or cannot hear they repudiate as extravagant and bad for the society.”<sup>317</sup> What he means by “them” refers most probably to the critical voices of RAPM musicians.<sup>318</sup> His defends himself against accusations of formalism at the end of the preface were also addressed to them, trying to make the reader convinced that his talk about form is not to be understood of being on the coast of the content.<sup>319</sup> It is funny how daring Asaf’ev’s criticism was towards the mud-slingers of the new music still in 1930. Such comments could not have been expressed few years later under the strengthening monolithic ‘Socialist Realist’ cultural policy under Stalin and Ždanov. The criticism expressed by Asaf’ev fits amusingly well to have directed in the mid

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<sup>315</sup> Ibid., pp. 4–5.

<sup>316</sup> Ibid., p. 9.

<sup>317</sup> Ibid., p. 10.

<sup>318</sup> See Asaf’ev’s letters to Lunačarskij in the summer of 1929. He was scared for his career because RAPM’s journal *Proletarskij Muzykant* (No. 2, p. 28, 31) kept attacking him and his works. In his letters he asked Lunačarskij to have a faith in the ideological integrity of his thoughts or to ask him to resign from his post. Asaf’ev mentioned also that he was holding back his book about Stravinsky because he was scared that he would be accused of “Westernness” and of being interested in “emigrant” music. (*Materialy* 1981, pp. 144–145, 164.)

<sup>319</sup> See *ibid.*, pp. 11–12.

forties towards the Soviet cultural rulers of which he himself became part of – willingly or unwillingly.

*The Book about Stravinsky* contains lots of characteristics adopted from the texts of Russian modernists, such terms as ‘dynamism’, ‘intensity’ and ‘musical speech’<sup>320</sup> as well as ‘the creative energy of an artist’, ‘the creative experience’, ‘organic development’<sup>321</sup>, ‘art and life’<sup>322</sup> (Žiznetvorčestvo), etc. Asaf’ev wrote *A Book about Stravinsky* almost simultaneously with the more theoretical book *Musical Form as a Process*. Many of the concepts and theoretical terms developed there appear already in the analyses of Stravinskij’s music such as the term intonation.

In his mature texts Asaf’ev extended the meaning of intonation from the conventional understanding of the term in his youthful texts: “exactitude in performance, purity of a sung or played sound”<sup>323</sup> into something wider, towards extra musical meanings. In *A Book about Stravinsky* Asaf’ev defines intonation as “the totality of sounds from whatever source, not only the audible music but the whole phenomenon of sound, actually or potentially audible as music.” To *intone*, means to define a system of sound-relationships.<sup>324</sup> Asaf’ev called his method the *intonation analyses* where an important place is given to melos. Asaf’ev stated that the Russian melos is “the living speech of Stravinskij, his native language, and not just material from which he takes quotations.” He also explained the general European intonation system through his analyses and stated “Stravinskij’s intonational sphere had come to include the general European musical language [--] joined this with the Russian melos which, thus, for Europe had ceased to be some sort of exotic monster and was realizing itself in an organically developing complex of musical intonations.”<sup>325</sup>

In the text of Stravinskij’s opera *Mavra*, intonation refers to the content of a musical composition. This function is stressed also in the first book *Intonation*, but in a very

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<sup>320</sup> Asaf’ev 1982: *Stravinsky*, see p. 208.

<sup>321</sup> Ibid, see p. 204

<sup>322</sup> Ibid, see pp. 202, 205.

<sup>323</sup> *Dictionary of the most important Musico-Technical Terms* (1919) quoted in Haas 1998, p. 60.

<sup>324</sup> Asaf’ev: *Stravinsky* 1982, p. 7.

<sup>325</sup> Ibid., p. 7–8.

different context, thus giving it totally different shade. In the Chapter on *Mavra* intonation is in most of all Asaf'ev's way of combining the content and form of a modern musical piece: "Let us regard *Mavra* as a way of combining rhythms and intonations such that rhythm itself is the plastic basis of the musical form that prevents the scattering of the intonations, and the intonations are brought into existence to act as the dynamic and emotional "soul" of rhythm, each sound, sung or played, presupposing precise muscular effort or the controlled expenditure of breath."<sup>326</sup> In short: here the musical composition is *Mavra*, which combines the rhythms (the form) and the intonations (the content). Intonations indicate that the rhythm has a living basis referring to actual life – breathing, which means that music/rhythm is not abstract. Here again Asaf'ev defends the new music from the accusations of formalism.<sup>327</sup> He goes quite far with his argument claiming that no music except the music produced by mechanical instruments and thus lacking the human breath, is completely without a feeling and make a music completely abstract, i.e. 'indifferent' to human emotions.<sup>328</sup>

Abstract art became a swearword in the Soviet Union after the declaration of socialist realism in 1932, and was already in 1929 something inadmissible in proletarian cultural circles. The concept of abstract art was difficult to define because critics mostly tended to accuse art of being abstract (and thus formalist<sup>329</sup>) whenever they did not understand the work which was the case many times during the Soviet Union. Asaf'ev tried to expand people's understanding of "the new music of Stravinskij", in order to make it living in people's minds. He dedicated himself to explaining what happened in music by words connecting it always somehow to life. According to him, *Mavra's* composer stood between the "pure music"<sup>330</sup> and true life.<sup>331</sup> He also placed Stravinskij and his work *Mavra* in the Pantheon of great masters such as Puškin, Glinka, Čajkovskij and

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<sup>326</sup> Ibid., p. 197.

<sup>327</sup> He also writes on page 202: "This song is the classic example – the complete and finished characterization – of these series of musical lyricism, in which the improvisatory and stereotypical constantly reinforce one another to produce *an emotional effect that is inseparable from the formal design.*" The italics are mine.

<sup>328</sup> Ibid.

<sup>329</sup> Formalist and abstract accusations referred to art that was a mere form without content.

<sup>330</sup> It was considered wholly intellectual and according to Asaf'ev "void of vitality and vigour" by some critics. (Ibid., p. 198.)

<sup>331</sup> "In *Mavra*, he was still moving directly toward ordinary life, choosing to approach it though the little grotesque story of Puškin that sparkles with the humour of everyday 'truths'" (Ibid. p. 198.)

also to Realist tradition<sup>332</sup>. He connected Stravinskij to the countryside culture yet hinting that also those who were brought up with gipsy songs would understand his music in the future.<sup>333</sup> Thus Asaf'ev was implanting his coming up theory of *Musical Form as a Process* (1930) and *Intonation* (1947) already in *A Book about Stravinsky* with an ultimate meaning: to justify the existence of the music that he liked, to try to convince others and develop their taste towards the new music, by explaining it to be a matter of getting used to the new intonations.<sup>334</sup> As we know, in practise, his theory didn't lead to the favourable conditions for the new aesthetics which existence he tried to defend. The ties of the new aesthetics to life needed to be indicated more throughoutly, but such endeavour was not possible yet on Stalin period. There was so deep fundamental philosophical contradiction between the Western Formalist idea and the Soviet socialist realism. Application of "formalist techniques" needed more time than Asaf'ev's lifetime to become "alive" in the Soviet Union. The fundamental premise of socialist realism was that art needed to reflect life truthfully. Thus a new technique needed to bring in life, not just to present as a self-independent factor, detached from life. Asaf'ev tried to do that in his writings.<sup>335</sup>

*A Book about Stravinsky* was the first serious attempt to write about Stravinsky's music in Russian context. Robert Craft points out that in 1930s *A Book about Stravinsky* would have been an important source for the Westerners who could not understand the entire phenomenon of Stravinsky's music, which streamed from the peculiarities of Russian culture.<sup>336</sup> Asaf'ev indicates those little details with a passion. All that probably annoyed Stravinskij, who wanted to cut his ties with the 'communists'.

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<sup>332</sup> "Never in Russian opera has the ambiance of the love song with guitar accompaniment, or the character of the person who sings such piece, been portrayed more accurately, more truthfully, or with greater art. (Ibid., 202.)

<sup>333</sup> Ibid., pp. 198–199. "Many Russian maidens have poured out their love in melodies like this and still do." Ibid., p. 200.

<sup>334</sup> See Ibid., p. 205: "This is often the case in the evolution of intonations: they develop in a given milieu and are sung and played by people who find in them wholly adequate means of expressing their experiences and feelings. When the society that produced the intonations is replaced by another... the development continues, but in a different direction."

<sup>335</sup> Asaf'ev wrote about new music a lot on 20s. The publishing house Triton published collections of articles which contained articles on new music: Glebov (Asaf'ev): "Prižok čerez ten" (Leap trough the shade/shadow) (1927); "Ot 'Novoj Muzyki' k novomu muzykal'nomu mirovozzreniju" (From "New music" to New Musical Worldview) (1927); "Muzyka 'Vocceka'" (Music of "Wozzek") (1927).

<sup>336</sup> However, this did not happened, partly because of the Stravinsky's negative attitude towards Asaf'ev. Asaf'ev: *Stravinsky* 1982, p. viii.

By placing Asaf'ev's text into its context, one can reveal Asaf'ev's philosophical and ideological characteristics: he was so eager to indicate the strong ties between the actual life and art.<sup>337</sup> This was important both to Symbolists<sup>338</sup> as well as to the Marxist-Leninist aesthetics, although differently. Few years after the publication of *A Book about Stravinsky* the statements of the Marxist-Leninist aesthetics needed to be implemented even to a greater extent. That is why the content of the book is yet relatively sensible compared to the *Intonation* (1948), which was more twisted with Soviet socialist realist obscurity.

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<sup>337</sup> See *Ibid.*, pp. 197, 200, 202.

<sup>338</sup> An interesting sentence that refers more to symbolist mystical thought than to Marxist-Leninist is on pp. 212–213: “He [Stravinsky] seizes on what others have long since discarded, and demonstrates that any of these intonation patterns can be made to radiate the smile of life, that all these intonations contain hidden sources of musical energy. The whole *Mavra* is like this.”

## 5. MUSICAL FORM AS A PROCESS AND THE SECOND LITERARY PERIOD

Asaf'ev considered *Musical Form as a Process* (1930) and *Intonation* (1947) originally as different volumes of one work titled “Muzykal'naja forma kak process” (Musical Form as a Process). However, he ceased from serious writing for a while during the RAPM's brief domination on the musical field. Because of the political unpredictability that reflected also to the artistic society, it was necessary for Asaf'ev to fix his views and terminology for the second book. In order to succeed he needed to anchor his theory deeper in the Marxist-Leninist ideology. For that reason I prefer to view the two books of *Musical Form as a Process* separately. Because both books exist in English and they are well condensed by McQuere (1983) in his article, I shall not repeat them here to save space. Instead I attempt to put some of the main themes in context and explain the principal differences of the two volumes.

### 5.1 *Musical Form as a Process* (Book I)

Book I, *Musical Form as a Process* was written during the years 1925–1929, but it fell under an ideological cloud soon after its first publication in 1930. It was not republished until 1965. *Musical Form as a Process* condensed Asaf'ev's theoretic-aesthetical thoughts that he had been working on already in his earlier articles such as “Stroenie veščestvo i kristallizacija (formoobrazovanie) v muzyke” (Organizing Material and Crystallization [shaping] in Music) (1920); “Process oformlenija zvučaščego veščestva” (Formation Process of Sounding Material) (1923); “Cennost' Muzyki” (Value of Music) (1923); Simfonizm kak problema sovremennogo muzykoznanija” (Symphonism as a problem of Modern Musicology) (1923).<sup>339</sup>

*Musical Form as a Process* is divided in three parts: 1. How Musical Formation Occurs, 2. Stimuli and Factors of Musical Formation and 3. Principles of Identity: Their Exposure in Crystallized Forms. The main theme is to explain the principles of musical formation/form, which Asaf'ev considered as a socially determined phenomenon,

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<sup>339</sup> Biography 1984, p. 165.

“revealing music socially in the process of its intoning”. According to him, an acoustic medium which is not organized by the human consciousness does not constitute music.<sup>340</sup> Asaf'ev compared musical form (a system of intonations) to language as a social institution:

[m]usic is a chain of mutations, conditioned, not only by the immanent laws of organization of the musical fabric, but also by the operation of social selection, which assures the longevity of some intonations and the dying off of others [--] I perceive this correlation of immanence and causality in music, not at all in the sense of a conditionality of a purely popular order (on the contrary, popular music is most often a conservative and inert factor, and there is no direct bridge from it to the highest stages of musical formation, although there is sometimes a “leap” over a huge number of vile tastes). I understand the causality in the same way in which the properties of linguistic mutation are presented by the outstanding French linguistic, A[ntonie] Meillet, in his *Linguistique historique et linguistique générale* (Paris, [E. Champion] 1921, pp. 15–18) [--] In this light it is quite possible to replace the concepts of linguistics, of language and its structure, with the concepts of musical knowledge, music as a language, and its forms [--]<sup>341</sup>

As pointed out earlier, Asaf'ev was moving towards more precise expression in his theory building. Asaf'ev tried constantly to “bring his theory up to date“. Some changes occurred also in book one, which indicate that Asaf'ev felt a need to fix and explain his concepts in order to formulate them in more suitable forms for the current aesthetics. He also dropped out some concepts that had become inappropriate to use. Changing ideological atmosphere in the Soviet Union towards the Socialist Realist art theory meant that the use of “mystical” language of symbolists and certain plurality in philosophical sense started to be risky and, soon, out of question. In *Musical Form as a Process* Asaf'ev rejected musical symbolism as one of the heritage of the formal aesthetics: “From musical symbolism, however, there is no bridge to living musical and

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<sup>340</sup> “Even the most primitive stages of selection of the media of musical expression from among acoustical phenomena; reveal the prolonged process of formation and the crystallization of that which is formed.” Asaf'ev: *Muz.Form.* 1977, p. 187. This of course excludes animals as potential music enjoyers, but does not exclude them as performers of music. Asaf'ev's view is certainly wide and modern. It basically includes all the sounds of nature to be music as long as someone considers them music i.e organizes them through his or her consciousness to be a system of sound relationship which constitutes a meaning of social or practical value. However, the main point here is of course Asaf'ev's attempt to tie the new, unfamiliar sounds of modern music to human life.

<sup>341</sup> Asaf'ev: *Muz.Form.* 1977, pp. 31, 332, 583; see also Asaf'ev: *Muz.Form.* 1971, pp. 94–95.

verbal intonation because of the abstractness of the term.”<sup>342</sup> Instead of employing the concept of musical symbolism Asaf’ev wanted to employ the terminology of linguistics which, according to him, would be more correct “in all cases, in which there is a close connection of music with surrounding reality through definitely figurative intonation, to attribute this connection to the area of musical semantics, as the expression of a completely practical interrelation.”<sup>343</sup>

Asaf’ev’s approach to musical system, similar to language, is semiotic. His historical and sociological method resembles to Ferdinand de Saussure’s definition of ‘semiology’ [semiotics]: ”a science that studies the life of signs within society”<sup>344</sup>. de Saussure wrote in his *Cours de linguistique générale* (Course in general linguistics) (1916) that language was a structured social code and speech was created from words available to the speaker in the language available to him at the time<sup>345</sup>. Asaf’ev, on the other hand, wrote in the first book:

It is natural that the principles of this organization are not the principles of individual creation, but rather, social principles [--] Music can be traced from intonations which are fixed in a given environment on the basis of directly utilitarian purposes [--]<sup>346</sup>

Each intonational system which form the music of different peoples and generation, up to that moment when it is fixed in the consciousness of the mass of people as a completed, familiar system of relations with the multi-significance peculiar to it, and after it is rationalized in the form of a sound series, a scale, or some other formula, passes through a long stage of organization (adaptation and selection).<sup>347</sup>

The system of de Saussure as well as of Asaf’ev was culture-biased, socially determined and not static. In the second book Asaf’ev employed a concept of *intonational vocabulary*, which determined the musical intonations that were comprehensible for the given epoch and thus important to be recognized by the composer in order to be able to send intelligible codes.

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<sup>342</sup> Asaf’ev: *Muz.Form.* 1977, p. 564.

<sup>343</sup> Ibid.

<sup>344</sup> Saussure: *Course in General Linguistics* (1966) p. 16 quoted in Smith 1998, p. 300.

<sup>345</sup> Smith 1998, p. 116.

<sup>346</sup> Asaf’ev: *Muz.Form.* 1977, p. 186.

<sup>347</sup> Ibid., p. 555.

Asaf'ev's whole theory is about the procedural nature of things in history. Music 'as a reflection of reality' functions the same way. According to him, musical form is not merely a constructive scheme, but also verified by listening, sometimes by several generations (i.e. socially manifested). It is the organization of musical material, or the organization of musical motion, comparable to a musical instrument.<sup>348</sup> Asaf'ev stated that generally speaking there is no stationary musical material:

Classical forms are the result of prolonged social selection of the most stable and useful intonations. But of course we should not regard them as being petrified or ossified, because the process of musical formation never stops, since it is a dialectical process, and since music which absolutely corresponds to some ideal, abstract schemes does not exist. Composers, who are considered by the rational aesthetic to be creators and strict observers of exemplary formal schemes, usually turn out to be the destroyers.<sup>349</sup>

From the technical point of view, as Tull has pointed out, book one is an attempt to explain the dynamic character of musical formation and its social manifestation. The main emphasis is placed on the dialectic formation, the coexistence and interpenetration of opposites<sup>350</sup>. The main question is “how” the organization of sound occurs and how music – its development in time – proceeds.<sup>351</sup> Asaf'ev's premises of musical formation appear most clearly in supplement 2, which was originally written in 1925-1926 and entitled as “The Basis of Russian Musical Intonation”. There he explains his fundamentals: an aesthetical criterion that is based on the historical, dialectical and social character of music and on a constant process. Following musicological and philosophical tendencies of the time, he explains the genesis of his musical terminology and specifies the most important terms of his theory: *intonation*, *melos*, *form*, *focal point*, *gravitation*, *tension (dynamic quality)*, *energy* and *linearity*. Asaf'ev explained that the necessity of new terms is to point out the dynamical, horizontal and procedural nature of music.<sup>352</sup> It is strange that he placed this section in the end even though it sets out the basics of his ideas.

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<sup>348</sup> Ibid., p. 187.

<sup>349</sup> Ibid., pp. 186–187; see also Asaf'ev: *Muz.Form.* 1971, p. 22.

<sup>350</sup> Tull 1977, p. 144.

<sup>351</sup> Asaf'ev: *Intonation* 1977, p. 600.

<sup>352</sup> Asaf'ev: *Muz.Form.* 1977, p. 548.

The discussion of a content of music is left almost wholly to the second book, but already in the first one Asaf'ev sets the basis for it. The basic idea appears for example in his definition of a concept of music's *poetic quality* which turns out to mean something quite different than it does in his earlier writings. In *Musical Form as a Process* the poetic quality is related to figurative quality in music. As Tull has pointed out in his commentary, Asaf'ev does not suggest that figurative content would be an immanent property of music, but rather that it is an associative phenomenon, related to extra-musical concepts<sup>353</sup>. Asaf'ev wrote:

Each epoch works out in operatic, symphonic, and song creation, a certain sum of “symbolic” intonations (sound complexes). These intonations spring up in invariable conjunction with poetic images and ideas, with concrete sensations (visual or muscular-motor), or with the expression of affects and various emotional conditions, i.e., in mutual “coexistence” with these factors. Thus extremely strong associations are formed, which are not inferior to meaningful verbal semantics. A sound image – an intonation which has taken on the significance of a visual image or concrete sensations – evokes an accompanying idea.<sup>354</sup>

According to Asaf'ev, certain kinds of *intonation habits* are acquired through several generations. They gradually become blunted as do the associations and semantics connected to them, which expose their conditional nature.<sup>355</sup>

Asaf'ev tried to explain the musicological approach to be similar to linguistics and to lift the musical system of intonations to the same level with the language system.<sup>356</sup> According to him, musical sounds were not meaningful, i.e. they were not intonations,

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<sup>353</sup> Ibid., p. 598.

<sup>354</sup> Ibid., p. 562.

<sup>355</sup> Ibid., p. 556.

<sup>356</sup> “There is no doubt that the music became a language, a sphere of the expression of feelings, and a manifestation of thought, as it is now perceived, under the influence of a series of stimuli which were not at all limited to those of an emotional order, although to deny the influence of the contrast of feelings experienced by man on the organization of musical phenomena seems to me impossible. However, systems of intoning, which have been justified by the experience of centuries, undoubtedly possess immanent properties of organization (which continuously ‘readjust’ to reality, as the highest criteria of their significance or force.” (Ibid., p. 554.)

without their context (musical work) and without a listener.<sup>357</sup> Thus for Asaf'ev as well as for de Saussure, the relationship between a *sign* (musical sound) and its *signifier* (its meaning) is arbitrary. There is no logical relationship between them. We cannot understand language without its socially determined and confirmed context. I would say that Asaf'ev's poetic quality in music, i.e. the figurative content of music is parallel to de Saussure's *linguistic value* of a word<sup>358</sup> in that it incorporates different meanings but does not, in itself, possess any meaning. This means that the meaning of a word, in any specific context, can only be established by its difference in a context from its other possible meanings<sup>359</sup>.

In a sense, Asaf'ev was a musical Formalist suggesting that sounds in themselves don't constitute a meaning, but in that case he didn't talk about music. According to him, formation of sounds is not yet music if there is no person to perceive it. In the book one, Asaf'ev defines musical content basically by different musically qualitative terms such as *simfonizm*. However, these statements were not enough to convince the Soviet authorities of the "antiformalist" qualities of his ideas, i.e. that music in itself was a human phenomenon. That's why in the book *Intonation*, he went even further to indicate the connection between music and life.

## 5.2 The Second Literary Period: *Intonation* (Book II)

Asaf'ev's second writing period consists of monographs on composers such as Glinka, Čajkovskij, the members of the 'Mighty Five', various Soviet composers and Western classics such as Grieg, Mozart, Beethoven and Gustav Mahler (1860–1911) (all of whom represented favourable musical aesthetics). Asaf'ev's wide range of texts included also a book on folk music and ethnomusicology. Many of his works appear in a praised anthology, which was published after his death: *Izbrannye trudy* (Selected

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<sup>357</sup> "Consequently, any musical presentation of sound, in order to become an intonation, cannot remain isolated; it is either the result of an already given correlation, or it evokes by its appearance a subsequent sound, for only then does musical motion occur with all its characteristics." (Ibid., p. 544.) "The ear becomes the measure of things in music. There are no abstract architectonics, no abstract visual form-schemes. (Ibid. p. 561.)

<sup>358</sup> See Smith 1998, p. 116.

<sup>359</sup> See *ibid.*

Works) (1952-1957). However, it was his book *Intonation*, which got the highest estimation among Soviet critics, and it was lifted up as the most valuable study book on musical aesthetics for generations of musical students. It is difficult to estimate objectively add of *Intonation* compared to his other works. It is, more than any other work of Asaf'ev, Marxist-oriented – as if his former theories had been dipped into materialist philosophy.

Book II, *Intonation* was announced almost immediately as a national treasure after its first publication in 1947 in the Soviet Union. Whereas in the first book the emphasis was in “how” the musical formation occurs, in the second book Asaf'ev tries to answer the question “why?” The main essence of the volume is to explain the social and historical causes of the evolutionary process of musical formation. This means explaining what the principles of intoning are, in which way they are manifestations of thought and how they are related to verbal speech.<sup>360</sup>

### 5.2.1 Asaf'ev's Intonation in Process

As Tull has noted, Asaf'ev's concept of intonation has little to do with the traditional Western interpretation of the term. He acknowledged the traditional definitions given at dictionaries, such as “accuracy or inaccuracy of pitch relations”, but considered them peripheral. As Tull has emphasized, Asaf'ev's broad definition was associated with a linguistic concept of intonation as a “meaningful expression in sound”.<sup>361</sup> Below there is a list of Asaf'ev's definitions of intonation from different periods in a chronological order.<sup>362</sup> The list shows some of the changes that occurred in his concept and helps to understand Asaf'ev's aesthetical development. In viewing Asaf'ev's whole production one may ask what was the result of Asaf'ev's many years explication towards the *Intonation*. Soviet authors called it the “cultivated” or “crystallized” form of Asaf'ev's thought.

<sup>360</sup> Asaf'ev: *Intonation*. 1977, p. 600; see also Tull 1977, p. 145; McGordon 1983, p. 235.

<sup>361</sup> Tull 1977, p. 152.

<sup>362</sup> The list has been initiated by David Haas and continued by me. I have modified some of the Haas' translations, for example *intonatsija* is always translated here as *intonation*. However, Haas' Russian term is actually better, because intonation is not understood conventionally by Asaf'ev.

1. *Dictionary of the most important Music-Technical Terms*, 1919: “exactitude in performance, purity of a sung or played sound”. As Haas writes, here intonation is restricted to the creation of an actual sound, measured against some previously internalized standard.<sup>363</sup>

2. *The Basis of Russian Musical Intonation* (1925-1926): The intonation appears here not as a mechanical action but as an interpretative act, a “bestowing of sense on the sound”.<sup>364</sup> “Without intoning there can be no music [--Concept of intonation is] the actual basis or the realization of sound, whether within the hearing, with the voice, or with the help of instrument [--Intonation is] the interpretation of sound”<sup>365</sup>

3. “O polifoničeskom isskustve, ob organnoi kul'ture i o muzykal'noj soveremennosti” [On Polyphonic Art, the Culture of Organ, and Musical Modernity] (1926): The moment of “decomposition” of an initial complex of intonation is dialectical, since the “given reality” of the intonation elicits within itself elements that become locked in struggle with that reality and assert their own autonomy, forming new sound complexes.<sup>366</sup>

4. *The Book about Stravinskij* (1929): “I often use the term ‘intonation’ and therefore I state that I mean thereby the totality of sounds from whatever source, not only the audible music but the whole phenomenon of sound, actually or potentially audible as music.” “To intone means to define a system of sound relationships.”<sup>367</sup>

5. *The Musical Form as a Process* (1930): “The intonation of speech is the interpretation of sounds not musically fixed, not stabilized into musical intervals or in a constant relationship of sounds set by tones. The musical intonation is the interpretation of sounds already placed in a system of sound relationships (pitches and tonalities) that are fixed precisely in the memory.”<sup>368</sup> “[Intonations] are assimilated by the environment through the most productive possible forms of music-making.”<sup>369</sup>

6. *Intonation* (1947) “Musical intonation is the organization of acoustical media, by the human consciousness, into meaningfully expressive sound correlations”. “Music is wholly an intonational art and is neither a mechanical transference of acoustical

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<sup>363</sup> Haas 1998, p. 60.

<sup>364</sup> Ibid.

<sup>365</sup> Asaf'ev: *Muz.Form.* 1977, p. 543.

<sup>366</sup> Haas 1998, p. 55.

<sup>367</sup> Asaf'ev: *The Book about Stravinsky* 1982, p. 7.

<sup>368</sup> Asaf'ev: *The Musical Form as a Process*, p. 198 quoted in Haas 1998, p. 61.

<sup>369</sup> Asaf'ev: *Muz.Form.* 1977, pp. 183–184.

phenomena into the area of artistic imagination, nor the naturalistic exposure of the sensual sphere. Like any activity of man, which apprehends and recognizes reality, music is directed by the consciousness and represents rational activity. The sensual (i.e., the emotional) tonus, inevitably characteristic of music, is not its cause, for music is an art of intoned meaning. This art is conditioned by nature and by the process of human intoning; man, in this process, does not consider himself apart from his relation to reality, and neither verbal nor musical intonation is exposed by means of mechanical articulation, removed from the quality of the voice.”<sup>370</sup>

As Haas has noted, the shift in Asaf’ev’s usage of the term *intonation* occurred when Asaf’ev began to place more emphasis on the phenomenon of internal hearing and the psychological aspects on producing a musical sound, i.e. the participation of human will and intelligence. As a result of this new usage, the intonation in music started to resemble intonation in speech.<sup>371</sup> The change occurred gradually and, as we can see, in *A Book about Stravinsky* his conception of the term was already very broad. As McQuere has pointed out, in his formulation Asaf’ev distinguished two meanings for the term. In a wide sense music is equal to intonation: the phenomenon of intonation is all and it explains all in music. In the narrow sense of the word, intonation is “the designation of separate representative phenomena of meaning in musical art.”<sup>372</sup> Tull suggests that the primary changes in intonation occurred between the definitions of “intonation as a manifestation of sound” and “intonation as an interpretation of sound”. Intonation, understood as the “interpretation” of sound refers to definite connotation of human communication, purposefulness, while manifestation reports more of acoustic phenomena.<sup>373</sup>

In the final stage of his concept, i.e. in the book of *intonation*, Asaf’ev “postulated regional, social, and historical “vocabularies” of intonation and drew upon a Marxist understanding of history and social change to explain the evolution and life-cycles of

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<sup>370</sup> Asaf’ev: *Intonation* 1977, pp. 904–905.

<sup>371</sup> Haas 1998, p. 60.

<sup>372</sup> McQuere 1983, p. 225.

<sup>373</sup> Tull 1977, p. 157.

these vocabularies”<sup>374</sup>. The book of *Intonation* contained also most of his earlier definitions, but in a reshaped, socially extended form.

I also see one of the major changes in Asaf’ev’s rational emphasis on musical intonation, which I explain in more detail in the next sub-Chapter. Although a rational element was always present in Asaf’ev’s writings, its emphasis grew enormously in *Intonation*. Compared to his earlier writings, such as the pages of the *Symphonic Etudes*, composers possessed also some kind of an emotional and mystical quality that was sensible through intuition by a listener.

### 5.2.2 Intonation in *Intonation*

It is hard to condense Asaf’ev’s concept of intonation shortly for two major reasons. First, his sentences need to be viewed in their context. His text is a progressive entity, where one sentence is almost inseparable from the others in relation to its correct meaning. Thus his text is parallel to his conception of intonation. Second, his concept of intonation becomes defined also through his other books, just as his writings on Russian composers. There he uses practical examples etc. Nevertheless, below I have tried to condense his views with a help of other scholars.

First of all, Asaf’ev distinguished intonation from a simple tone. As Tull has pointed out, Asaf’ev’s definition of intonation was applicable not only to the creative (compositional) aspects of music but equally to its performance and to its perception by the listener. Relationship is important in this understanding of the concept, and interval is a basic unit, by virtue of its quality of relationship. Tull writes that “Asaf’ev equates a single tone with the sound of a vowel or consonant, which has no meaning except in combination with the sounds.”<sup>375</sup> Within relationship and meaning the tone becomes intonation. Thus intonation is distinguished from a single musical tone and the

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<sup>374</sup> Haas 1998, p. 61.

<sup>375</sup> Tull 1977, pp. 154–155. See Asaf’ev: *Muz. Form.* 1977, pp. 615–618.

distinction is largely semantic, i.e. while musical tone is purely an acoustic phenomenon, intonation means connotation of expressiveness, (referring to meaning).<sup>376</sup>

By stressing the importance of human voice and the possession of tone in human communication, Asaf'ev emphasized also the vocal quality of music<sup>377</sup>:

[I] will try to link the development of the means of expression of music with the principles of human intoning as a manifestation of thought, with musical tones in their manifold conjugations, and with verbal speech.<sup>378</sup>

Both Orlova and Tull emphasize that much of Asaf'ev's Marxist orientation can be traced directly back to Hegel and his *Lectures on Aesthetics*.<sup>379</sup> This is evident since Lenin as well as Marx or Engels wrote hardly anything about music. As Tull has extensively written, "Hegel regarded music as an exclusively human phenomenon, the only thing in nature which is inherently musical being the human voice."<sup>380</sup> Human voice was placed in a high position also in the Soviet aesthetics producing a special criterion for compositions such as *songfulness* or *melodiousness*. Asaf'ev wrote that "[m]elody is the soul of music, because it is a sensitive reflection of the principal quality of human, 'vocal speech,' of utterance in tone, in vocal continuity. Therefore, melody is, in principle, continuous."<sup>381</sup> However, melody was in Asaf'ev's conception only an aspect of his important concept of *melos* which he defined as quality and functions of melodic formation.<sup>382</sup>

To point out the independent status of music as a language system equal to spoken, Asaf'ev made a distinction between speech intonation and musical intonation. However, before explaining their fundamental differences, it is important to explain the concept of

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<sup>376</sup> Tull 1977, p. 155.

<sup>377</sup> See Tull 1977, p. 143 and Asaf'ev: *Intonacija* (1947) p. 140.

<sup>378</sup> Asaf'ev: *Intonation* 1977, p. 600.

<sup>379</sup> Tull 1977, p. 142.

<sup>380</sup> *Ibid.*, p.143.

<sup>381</sup> Asaf'ev: *Intonation* 1977, p. 935.

<sup>382</sup> See Asaf'ev *Muz.Form.* 1977, p. 541.

*tonal tension* which is present in both kinds of intonations<sup>383</sup>. The condition of tonal tension means practically intonation in general sense:

[T]he life of tones and words (which the content of speech is grasped depends) is fused into the fluidity and continuity of an emotionally vocal, “tonational” effort and tension, closely united with breathing. This tension, by its fluidity reflects the continuity of thinking, for thinking as an activity of the intellect is only partially expressed in the flashing in the consciousness of the “intermittence of words,” but, in essence, it is “melodic”, “tuneful”, fluid, and conditioned by a kind of “mental breathing” and rhythm, appearing as “mental intoning”.<sup>384</sup>

The condition of tonal tension is one of Asaf'ev's most mysterious and confusing explanations in *Intonation*. Nevertheless, it is part of his theoretical explanation of intonation as a general phenomenon. It is one of the main stimulus for the constant process. The concept of tension becomes more understandable when one remembers that intonations cannot exist independently. Thus the tension could be seen as a result of the context. In my understanding, it is something that at the same time is a result of opposite poles, i.e. different materials of the composition and at the same time binds them together<sup>385</sup>. In relation to musical works Asaf'ev talks of *linear tension*, which is inherent in intonation and present in musical works of so called “process” type. Haas has written that “[t]he term linearism, already used to describe much Western European music of the 1920s, had for Asaf'ev an added connotation: It described the tensions within a melodic line or several lines in interaction, including, but not limited to, the force of tonal centers.”<sup>386</sup>

Asaf'ev explains the distinction between speech and musical intonation Asaf'ev explains through the expressive phenomenon of interval that is according to him the precise determinant of the emotionally meaningful quality of intonation. According to Asaf'ev, interval is developed in public consciousness and is present only in music, for

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<sup>383</sup> “This phenomenon or “condition of tonal tension,” which conditions both ‘verbal speech’ and ‘musical speech’, I call intonation.” (Asaf'ev: *Intonation* 1977, p. 931.)

<sup>384</sup> Ibid., pp. 930–931.

<sup>385</sup> The result and the meaning of musical piece depend on whether the materials of the combination are well selected from the given epoch.

<sup>386</sup> Haas 1998, p. 79.

verbal speech had no need for it.<sup>387</sup> Yet he makes another distinction between their intellectual and emotional emphasis:

[T]he tonus of the human voice – the manifestation of psychological reality in sound – is always “coloured” with emotional meaning and more or less emotionally tense, depending on the extent of the pitch range. But the formation of sensations exposed in sound – i.e., intoned – is always controlled by brain, by the intellect; otherwise music would be some sort of “art of interjection,” and not an art of the reflection of reality in sound images by means of the human vocal apparatus, and with a musical instrumentation which reproduces to a significant extent the human process of intoning, especially in the formation of melody. Because melody, in its emotionally meaningful expressiveness, is wholly a creation of the human consciousness, and its basis is a strictly rationalistic system of intervals.<sup>388</sup>

Asaf'ev's emphasis on intellect in the process of musical intoning is interesting, or as he says elsewhere in *Intonation*: a composer makes a rational selection of intonations. Emotional aspect to music is replaced here with a concept of artistic quality, which is explained through *intonational sensitiveness*, an ability to select the best intonations. According to Asaf'ev, intonational sensitiveness needs to be recognized by a composer because it is the key to the comprehension of the realistically meaningful bases of musical art.<sup>389</sup> Asaf'ev writes that “Intonational sensitivity, in the relation of melodic and harmonic content and the construction of cadences, constitutes a characteristic sign of stylistic intellectual activity, intelligent mastery, and disclosures of the ‘personal handwriting’ of the composer [--]”<sup>390</sup> These kinds of instructions to composers were typical for the Soviet time musical critics. They said practically nothing.

### 5.2.3 Speculations

It is difficult to estimate whether *Intonation* was really something that Asaf'ev himself considered a theoretical or philosophical cultivation of his ideas. Had there not been a

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<sup>387</sup> Asaf'ev: *Intonation* 1977, p. 931.

<sup>388</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 905.

<sup>389</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 907.

<sup>390</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 928.

strict ideological context of the Soviet Union, the book could have developed into something else, maybe even into a deeper and more interesting theory, containing detailed references to general philosophical and scientific theories of the time. However, I agree with McQuere in that, despite of Asaf'ev's confusing style of language, both books of *Musical Form as Process* stand as systematic presentation of his ideas, analogous to his model for the evolution of music<sup>391</sup>.

I also align to Tull in that Asaf'ev did emphasize human communication more in *Intonation* than in his earlier works. However, it was not a new quality in Asaf'ev's texts. He put an extra emphasis on it during the time of the socialist realism because he needed to point out a closer connection between an abstract form and a social, "human" content.

In a philosophical and music-aesthetical sense, the most important emphasis of Asaf'ev was on the qualitative meaning of his terminology. This feature preserved throughout his writings. The terms such as *form as a process*, *simfonizm*, *intonation* and *melos*<sup>392</sup> all require some kind of a dynamical quality of music. Through that quality Asaf'ev defined music's content and aesthetical quality, or in Soviet terms, the "realist" quality of music<sup>393</sup>.

According to Asaf'ev, realist quality in music laid in the right selection of intonations that were typical for the given epoch<sup>394</sup>. Asaf'ev wrote that if an artist's world-view was not realistic his art may become either romantic or abstractly academic. In sum, the musical emphasis on quality reduced in *Intonation* as music's social nature became to

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<sup>391</sup> See McQuere 1983, p. 246.

<sup>392</sup> In *Musical Form as a Process* Asaf'ev writes that melos includes melodiousness, connectness, and dynamic quality "as the operation of forces which condition the sound experienced in the correlations of pitches, in the purposeful interchange of tones, and in their conjugation. (Asaf'ev *Muz.Fom.* 1977, p. 541)

<sup>393</sup> Asaf'ev talks about the situation on the field of musical criticism in *Intonation* and defines the concept of Realism in art: "When I state that the sources and roots of the realistic in music lie in the intonational communication of people, and in the recognition of these socializing elements of music in the compositions of the musical past and present, I am trying to base the problem of musical realism on the unquestionability of the experience of musical communication, on the continuously occurring process of assimilation, evaluation, recognition and non recognition of music of ones' environment." (Asaf'ev: *Intonation* 1977, p. 729.)

<sup>394</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 731–732.

be Asaf'ev's topmost idea. The qualitative elements, i.e. intonations<sup>395</sup> differed in different epochs and they were socially determined. The terminology that Asaf'ev created sustained the changing quality and it changed along with the new aesthetics. This was typical not only for the philosophical ideas of the idealist philosophers that Asaf'ev was inclined to in his early writings, but also for the Soviet language. The whole society was seen at the time as a temporal state, on the way to its ideal.

The biggest problem in the second book of *Musical Form as a process* is that Asaf'ev needed to fix his language so that it was less music-theoretical and abstract, and more socio-historical. This required neologisms etc. In the first book Asaf'ev's theory was still a bit too "formalist" in the eyes of the party-minded musicians. His work included a contradiction: the arbitrariness of music. The content was socially determined and thus agreed. According to Asaf'ev, music in 'itself' does not constitute a meaning. The content is created by people who listen to music together with the people who compose and perform it. His theory showed how the abstract became non-abstract in people's consciousness through the familiarization of material. It was parallel to the development of language skills. With his theory Asaf'ev actually criticized the society and its usually conventional rules, which sometimes failed to understand the genius. He also criticized fortune-hunters in music that only invented technical popular ideas but failed to compose true music with a real artistic quality. Because of it, he kept emphasizing the qualitative elements in music and not the technical elements:

In the study of music as a science, great interest is taken in the quantitatively measurable, acoustical standardization of intervals. This is proper, although this is not at all what is important in the history of music, where only the intonationally qualitative significance of an interval and its place in a system of conjugate tones (a scale or a mode) determine its vital capacity in music.<sup>396</sup>

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<sup>395</sup> The people, the culture, and the historical epoch define the stages of intonation, and through intonation are determined both the means of musical expression, and the selection and interconnection of musical elements. (Asaf'ev: *Muz.Form.* 1977, pp. 613.)

<sup>396</sup> Asaf'ev: *Intonation* 1977, pp. 602.

Asaf'ev tried to resolve the defect present in the first book of *Musical Form as Process* in the first pages of the *Intonation* by combining music and life even with a greater extent:

Musical intonation never loses its ties with the word, nor with the dance, nor with the mimicry (pantomime) of the human body, but it “re-interprets” the purposefulness of their forms and the constituent elements of form into its own (musical) expression.<sup>397</sup>

In many respects *Intonation* kept repeating what Asaf'ev had already said in other writings. The idea of *intonational crisis*<sup>398</sup>, *intonational vocabulary*<sup>399</sup> and *intonational analyses*<sup>400</sup> already appeared in his earlier writings, but here they were put on titled and more specified frames. However, in *Intonation* the problem is in his confused delivery: his ideas are mixed with ideology and justification. The main premises of his theory are actually reducible into quite an economical space, but in his text he kept repeating them over and over again in different forms and sometimes controversially<sup>401</sup>. Why is that?

An ideological reason could be one answer to this question. Along the way there are actually some sentences that are ideologically questionable but well hidden. For example the concept of intonational crises could be seen as an evaluation of the 1936 happenings, when Šostakovič was charged of formalism. Asaf'ev's explanation of society rejecting the new intonations reflects the situation in the field of cultural politics

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<sup>397</sup> Ibid., pp. 601

<sup>398</sup> Musical evolution is regarded by Asaf'ev to happen through intonational crises which are seen as radical re-evaluations of intonational values and which occur as consequences of great social upheavals. “In such a crisis there is a marked tendency to discard everything regarded as superfluous in music in the name of truth of expression.” (Tull 1977, pp. 161–162.)

<sup>399</sup> It refers to all musical ideas, often just fragments, which are crystallized in the collective consciousness of people within a given epoch and environment, and which represent the totality of all previous musical experience of that epoch. (See Tull 1976, pp. 159–160).

<sup>400</sup> It is an analysis of the communicative and expressive properties of the composition under study. It is “a method of analysing form, viewed in this dual perspective [form as a process and, simultaneously, as a crystallized scheme], intonational analysis may be defined as the theoretical analysis of the form of a specific composition as a relatively complete entity, perceived in terms of the concrete content and interpretation of its historical setting.” (This definition is by Jinarek, p. 298, mentioned in Tull 1976, p. 164.)

<sup>401</sup> One could interpret this as a formalist idea: “This path of musical intonation toward music as an independent manifestation of intonation runs, if not parallel to, then very likely close interaction with, the rise of entirely musical phenomena and the fixing in the public consciousness of qualities and forms of music alone, as a direct musical manifestation of the human intellect. (Asaf'ev: *Intonation* 1977, pp. 601–602. The underlining is mine.) The rational quality of music is in contradiction to his earlier statements, where he emphasized creative and intuitive qualities in relation with musical composition.

of 1940s. Was that his way of holding on to his old modernist opinions? However, although the outlines of his theory accepted modern music, the intonational analysis and the language in *Intonation*, which was typical to Soviet critics, made it quite impossible:

The more subjective and sharp in its intonational treatment the “language” of the composer, the more difficult and the shorter is the life of his music. The more strongly a circle of expressive musical intonations, summarized by given epochs, is felt, even in the most intellectually complicated musical compositions, the more unconditional is the vital capacity of this music.<sup>402</sup>

Works that Asaf'ev considered to have a lasting value were such as Beethoven's Third, Fourth, Fifth, Sixth and Ninth Symphonies, those that were lifted on high position within the socialist realist aesthetics. According to Asaf'ev, great composers often choose simple and vital intonations.<sup>403</sup> These kinds of instructions were given to the composers of the socialist realism. However one cannot say that Asaf'ev was the one who formed the socialist realist language in the Soviet Union. The process was certainly dialectical.

Another answer to the stated question of Asaf'ev's confusing metaphors can be found within his original philosophical stance i.e. from Bergson's intuitive philosophy and from the mixed scientific-artistic tendencies of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. As Haas has pointed out, Asaf'ev never intended his theory to get into a technical sphere<sup>404</sup>. Its basis was in idealist philosophy. According to this view, words and conceptualized schemes never attain the reality but only intuition. From this basis, neologisms and controversial ideas were only leading stars or “fixed points in time” that were means to directing the intuition towards the existing objects in process.

As many scholars have noted, Asaf'ev's musical ideas are rather general and easy to challenge. His theory of composition is less descriptive than the theories of other 20<sup>th</sup>-century composers<sup>405</sup>. However, his general philosophical ideas of the living and

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<sup>402</sup> Asaf'ev: *Intonation* 1977, p. 936.

<sup>403</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 939–942. See also McQuere 1983, p. 246.

<sup>404</sup> Haas 1998.

<sup>405</sup> See *Ibid.*, p. 79; McQuere 1983.

procedural nature of music created an option for schematic contemplation of music. His philosophical definitions within conventional terminology such as *simfonizm* and *intonation* influenced the Soviet and the current Russian musicological thinking.

## 6. CONCLUSIONS

My Chapter of conclusions falls short to avoid repetition since the nature of the study is to draw conclusions as the text proceeds (I would inform one to take a look at the Chapters 4.3.1, 4.3.2 and 5.2.3 to get the fast results of this work). Indeed, in this Chapter, I make only some general conclusions.

In this overview on Asaf'ev, I have tried to illuminate some of the problems that are related to the study on Asaf'ev and on Soviet musicology in general. I have tried to gather information and to create the basis for my future studies on Asaf'ev and on Russian music and culture in general.

In the first Chapters I came to a conclusion that socialist realism is a wide phenomenon that needs to be approached from different aspects. When exploring cultural figures of Soviet time, not only the socialist realist context is important, but also its roots, the past Russian tradition of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The field of study is contradictory but not impossible. There may not be logic but there are answers.

The short biography functions in this work as a skeleton, and as I mentioned, the critical biography has not yet been written. Asaf'ev's political side is also quite obscure. However, personally I am not as interested to study his political side as I am interested to study his influence on Soviet music and his status in the Russian musical tradition. I have no desires to take a stand to the moral questions of Asaf'ev's character. However, this as well as my future studies on Asaf'ev may produce some kind of a survey on the question along the way but hopefully without any emotional preference as some scholars tend to have. Secondly, whether Asaf'ev was a loyal bolševik in his thoughts one may never find out. There is no family left to tell and even that would hardly give objective information. Many Russians lived double life during the Soviet Union. Among others, Igor Stravinskij is a good example of that. As Rosamund Bartlett has noted: "Stravinsky was proficient in creating a smoke-screen about who he really was...Stravinsky's habit of falsifying his own life story means that we must clearly treat his pronouncements with circumspection, but his highly emotional and apparently

involuntary reaction in 1962 to being back on Russian soil (which he claimed even had a particular smell), nevertheless speaks volumes about the continuing importance of his native origins.”<sup>406</sup>

I call the Chapter Four and Chapter Five as my “etudes” or designs which I plan to develop in my future studies to make more systematical presentation of the development of Asaf’ev’s aesthetical vision. The study of the development of Asaf’ev’s aesthetical terminology is very challenging for a scholar. He formulates his main concepts over and over again and reinterprets conventional terminology. Yet his writings are sometimes contradictory. In addition he tends to use rather original phrases and synthesis of words. That is why his texts sometimes represent almost more artistic than scholarly endeavors. These features were very typical to Russian modernist movements and especially to the Futurists who sought to “liberate the words” following the example of Italian Futurist and ex-Symbolist Filippo Marinetti’s manifestation of 1912<sup>407</sup>. However, Asaf’ev can not be regarded as a pure representative of any exact modernist movement. He didn’t turn his back to Puškin, as the Futurists tried to do. Moreover he continued the Stasovian tradition and explored the past Russian classical tradition with a fresh insight that was influenced by the modernist theories.

As it has been argued in this work, Asaf’ev was not a dedicated follower of any philosophical system, moreover he fused many theories and eventually formulated his own theory of intonation, which was suitable for socialist realist standards since its original, especially Western idealist philosophical roots were well covered and hidden. That is why I chose Hillary Fink’s notion as a starting point for this work, i.e. to view Asaf’ev’s texts through different modernist and philosophical prisms; and not straightforwardly (as Orlova has emphasized, that it was not the case with Asaf’ev’s interpretations) but as they would be different windows towards the understanding of his concepts. This leads to a conclusion that Asaf’ev’s theories reflect different modernist tendencies but he was also an original thinker and made his own synthesis.

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<sup>406</sup> Cross 2003, p. 3. The same problem is discussed in Taruskin 1996, pp. 1–19.

<sup>407</sup> Lawton 1988, p. 3.

Chapter Five concludes that although Asaf'ev was a capable researcher, he also wanted to be a famous scholar and please the party elite. He transformed along with the prevailing conditions like a chameleon. This reflects the culture of his epoch: the development of the politics and the artistic policy in the Soviet Union. The theory of Intonation was an evolving entity. Asaf'ev started to develop its concepts already in his early writings. Although his fundamental theses remained moderately stable, his works on the whole contain many contradictions, which is partly due to the artistic policy of the Soviet Union. This feature makes it very hard to condense his views.

For me Asaf'ev's early literary production has been a real prelude to Russian cultural and musicological field whereas his later production has been particularly interesting in relation with the musical semiotics and Russian political and ideological field. The most important aspect in Asaf'ev's *oeuvre* is not necessarily the consistency of his theories, because his writings and his theory of Intonation are by no means watertight. More interesting is the manner he talks about Russian music and culture (for example, he was the first scholar to write about the music of Stravinskij in 1929) and how his works reflect the general tendencies of the philosophy and aesthetics of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Equally interesting is how he inconsiderately stole ideas from other scholars and his obscure political side that still lacks a detailed study.

### A Note on Transliteration

An international system of transliteration is employed in this work. Although English literature most commonly uses British system when translating people's names, this work uses international system systematically in all cases. Thus Louré is translated Lur'e and Stravinsky is transliterated Stravinskij. The international system of transliteration is employed here for two reasons: first of all, it is more precise and readable for non-native English speakers than the British system. Second, it is clearer to use only one transliteration for the sake of coherence of the work. The Following table sets out the system used.

Russian letter	'International' System
А а	a
Б б	b
В в	v
Г г	g
Д д	d
Е е	je/e
Ё ё	jo/ë
Ж ж	ž
З з	z
И и	i
Й й	j
К к	k
Л л	l
М м	m
Н н	n
О о	o
П п	p
Р р	r
С с	s
Т т	t
У у	u
Ф ф	f
Х х	h
Ц ц	c
Ч ч	č
Ш ш	š
Щ щ	šč
Ь ь	”
Ы ы	y
Ь ь	,
Э э	è
Ю ю	ju
Я я	ja

## List of some of the Notable Works of Asaf'ev in Chronological Order:

**1917**

Article:

“Vpečatlenija i Mysli” [Experiences and thoughts] in *Melos: Knigi o muzyke* [Melos: Books about music]

**1918**

Articles:

“Soblazny i preodolenija” [Temptations and triumphs] in *Melos: Knigi o muzyke* [Melos: Books about music]

“Puti v buduščee” [Pathways to the future] in *Melos: Knigi o musike* [Melos: Books about music]

**1919**

Putevoditel' po kontcertam: 1. Slovar' naibolee neobhodimyh muzykal'no-tehničeskikh oboznačeenii [Concert Guide: (1) Dictionary of the Most Important Technical Musical Terms]

**1922**

Monographies on Frans Liszt, Rimskij-Korsakov and Chopin

**1923**

*Simfoničeskie etjudy* [Symphonic Etudes]

Monographies on Musorgskij, Skrjabin and Čajkovskij

**1924**

Monography on Glazunov

**1928**

*Russkaja muzyka XIX i načalo XX veka* [Russian Music from the Beginning of the Nineteenth Century]

**1929**

*Kniga o Stravinskom* [A Book about Stravinsky]

**1930**

*Muzykal'naja forma kak process.* [Musical Form as a Process]

**1941–1942**

Monography on Grieg

**1944**

Monography on Rimskij-Korsakov

**1948**

*Intonacija* [Intonation], Monography on Glinka

## Note on Abbreviations of Quoted Material

Asaf'ev: *Muz. Form.* 1971: Asaf'ev, Boris V. *Muzykal'naja forma kak process*. [Musical Form as a Process.] 2 vols. in 1. 2nd ed. Leningrad: "Muzyka", 1971.

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Asaf'ev: *Ob Opere* 1976: Asaf'iev, Boris V. *Ob opere*. Izbrannye staty. [About opera. Selected Articles.] Leningrad: "Muzyka", 1985.

Asaf'ev: *O Simfonizme* 1981 [1921]: Asaf'iev, Boris V. *O simfoničeskoj i kamernoj muzyke. Pojasnenija i priloženija k programmam simfoničeskih i kamernih koncertov*. [On Symphony- and Chamber Music. Explanations and appendices for the symphonic and chamber concert programs.] "O Simfonizme" [On simfonizm] 1921, pp. 96–101. (Dmitrieva-Mej, T. P. and Dmitriev, A. N., eds.) Leningrad: "Muzyka", 1981.

Asaf'ev: *Pathways* 2003: Glebov, Igor [Boris Asaf'ev]. "Puti v buduščee." [Pathways to the future.] In *Melos: Knigi o muzyke*. [Melos: Books about music.] (Glebov, I. and Suvčniskii, P., eds.) vol. 2 [St. Petersburg, 1918] in Cambell, Stuart ed. and English trans. *Russians on Russian music, 1880–1917*. An Anthology. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press 2003.

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Asaf'ev: *Simf. E* 1970: Asaf'ev, Boris V. *Simfoničeskie etjudy*. [Symphonic Etudes.] Leningrad: "Muzyka", 1970.

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*Izbrannye Trudy I -V*: Asaf'ev, Boris V. *Izbrannye trudy*. [Selected works in 5 vols.] Moscow 1952–1957.

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## Abbreviations

**Agitotdel** [the Agitational Department of the Music Section of the State Press] was established by the government in 1922 to co-ordinate the composition, publication and distribution of musical propaganda, headed by Lev Šul'gin (1890–1968). Both ORKiMED and RAPM evolved from it.<sup>408</sup>

<sup>408</sup> See Edmunds 2004, p. 105.

ASM (Associcija Sovremennoj Muzyki) [The Association of Contemporary Music] The membership of ASM (1923–1928) consisted of representatives of academic art and the modern music project, and the association was in relationship with ISCM (International Society of Contemporary Music). The Leningrad Section of ASM (LASM) was founded in 1926.

Komsomol (Kommunističeskij Sojuz Molodjoži) [The Communist Youth League]

Balakirevskij Kružok or Mogučaja Kučka [Mighty Five or Mighty Handful] (1857–1862). Members of the circle were: Andrej Rimskij-Korsakov, Milij Balakirev (the leader of the group), Aleksandr Borodin, Tsezar' Kjuj and Modest Musorgskij.

MUZO (Muzykal'nyj otdel) [Musical section] of Narkompros was founded at the end of January (according to Gregorian calendar) of 1918. The first four members, nominated in musical board were A. M. Avraamov, A. S. Lur'e, B. A. Kušner and S. Ja. Agronskij. After March, they were replaced with a council with director N. A. Mal'ko, A. S. Lur'e, critic N. P. Malkova and singer A. G. Žerebcova-Andeeva and later also director A. Kouts and singer I. V. Tartakov. After some conflicts the new board was chosen with the names of A. Lur'e, B. V. Asaf'ev, pianist S. S. Mitusov, composer A. P. Vaulin and pianist V. L. Pastuhov. (More information about MUZO see Krusanov 2003, pp. 614–653.) MUZO became GIMN (Gosudartsvennyj institut muzykal'nyx nauk) [State Institute of Musical Science] in 1921.

Narkompros (Narodnyj kommissariat prozveščeniya) [the People's Commissariat of Education]. See MUZO.

ORGKOMITET (Organizacionnyj komitet) [An Organizational Committee] was set up in 1939 to coordinate the activities of the Union of Soviet Composers in Moscow. Its mouthpiece was the journal Sovetskaja Muzyka, founded in 1933.

ORKiMD (Obščestvo revoljucionnyh kompozitorov i muzykal'nyh dejatelej) [The association of Revolutionary Composers and Musical Activists] was formed by Lev Šul'gin and Aleksej Sergeev in 1924.

OTIM (Otdel teorii i istorii muzyki) [The Department of Theory and History of Music] was a section at the Russian Institute of Art History.

Proletkult (Proletarskaja kul'turno-prosvetitel'naja organizacija) [Proletarian Organizations of Culture Education] repeated the Silver-age idea that art was a creation of life. However, the point of importance was not anymore the artistic individual but the artistic society and the change of reality – *žitnetvorčestvo*: the art influences on life.<sup>409</sup> Proletkult's utopian thinking was close to Symbolists, Futurists and Communists. The head organizer was the brother-in-law of Lunačarskij, Aleksander Bogdanov, whose Nietzschean "God is dead" philosophy was handed God's creative ability over to human society. The goal of Proletkult was to build a new society and to break down the old ties with the bourgeois culture. The members wanted to create totally new kind of art, which would remove the fences between the cultural intelligentsia and "underdeveloped" masses. As a result, they founded experimental studios, where new kind of sounds and techniques were produced and where workers were invited to participate in creating art under the guidance of the artists. The most popular form of music were revolutionary hymns and folk songs for choir to which all could join, and technical sounds, related to workers' own culture. Many famous composers joined Proletkult. Among those were: Nikolai Roslavec (1881–1944), Leonid Sabaneejev (1881–1968) Reinhold Glière, Grigorij Ljubimov ja Arsenij Avraamov.<sup>410</sup>

Prokoll (the Production Collective of Moscow Conservatory Students) was founded in 1925 by students of Moscow Conservatory. Specialized in musical propaganda but sought to distance both RAPM and

<sup>409</sup> Maes 2002, [1996], pp. 240, 256.

<sup>410</sup> Maes 2002, [1996], pp. 237–240; Edmunds: Seminar paper/Bristol 2003, pp. 8–9.

ORKiMD. They did not want to cut all the musical ties to the past. The leader of the group was Aleksandr Davidenko (1899–1934).<sup>411</sup>

RAPM or VAPM (Rossijskaja/ Vsesojuzkaja Asociacija Proletarskih Muzykantov) [Russian/All-Union Association of Proletarian Musicians] was created in 1923 by Lev Šul'gin with Aleksej Sergejev, David Černomordikov and Dmitrij Vasil'ev-Bulgaj and specialized in musical propaganda and agitation to broad masses. The members were composers, performer, music teachers and instructors working in the amateur music field and majority of them were associated with trades' unions, the military, or Communist Party or Komsomol.<sup>412</sup> RAPM shared the same motto as Lenin when he declared that art belongs and must be understood by people (the victorious proletariat) and that's why RAPM was against any form of musical creation apart from the immediate sounding illustration to ideological dogmas. They preferred "mass songs" with ideological texts, usually written by poets allied in the homologous organization of proletarian writers. In 1932 the RAPM was liquidated, when the Soviet Union of Composers was established.

RAPP (Rossijskaja Asociacija Proletarskih Pisatelej [Russian Association of Proletarian Writers])

RITM (Razryad istorii i teorii muzyki) [Section of History and Theory of Music] was a section in the Leningrad Institute of Arts Hirtory. Later changed into OTIM

TEO (Teatral'nyj otdel) [Drama Section] of Narkompros.

### **List of Names** (following the Russian alphabetical order)

Al'švang, Arnold Aleksandrovič (1898–1960) Soviet musicologist and a doctor of arts, who studied at the Kiev Conservatory. Among his teachers were Nejghauz, Xodorovskij, Glier and Javorskij.

Asaf'ev, Boris Vladimirovič (1884–1849) Soviet composer and a musicologist.

Avraamov, Apsenij Mihajlovič (1886–1944) musicologist, folklorist and a composer . He used fourth tone-system (popular in 1910), he functioned in Narkompros, Proletkult and did experiments in music. He had been Tanejev's student when he studied in Moscow Conservatory.

Bahtin, Mihail Mihajlovič (1895–1975) Soviet literature scholar, linguist and a philosopher.

Balakirev, Miliij Aleksejevič (1837–1910) Russian composer.

Bal'mont, Konstantin (1867–1941) Russian Symbolist poet.

Beethoven, Ludwig van (1770–1827) German composer.

Beljajev, Viktor Mihailovič (1888–1968) musicologist and a professor in Moscow Conservatory. In 1914–23 and in 1942–44 he taught musical theory in Petrograd Conservatory (Leningrad) and in 1923–1924, 1938–1940 and in 1943–59 musical theory and history in Moscow Conservatory. He was an active member of GAHN, (Gosudarstvennaja akademija hudožestvennyh nauk) and in 1923–30 an active member of ASM.

Belyj, Andrej [Boris Bugajev] (1880–1934) famous Russian Symbolist poet and writer.

<sup>411</sup> See more information in Edmunds 2004, p. 107.

<sup>412</sup> See more information of RAPM in Edmunds 2004, pp. 105–122.

Berg, Alban (1885–1935) Austrian composer.

Bergson, Henri (1859–1941) French philosopher. He won the Nobel prize in Literature in 1927.

Blok, Aleksandr (1880–1921) famous Russian symbolist poet and a writer.

Bogatyrev, Semjon Semjonovič (1890–1960) lawyer and a doctor of music. In 1917–1919 he worked as a teacher.

Borodin, Aleksandr (1833–1887) Russian composer.

Brik, Osip (1888–1945) Russian Formalist.

Brjusova, Nadežda Jakovlevna (1881–1951) sister of a Symbolist poet Valerij Jakolevič Brjusov and an author of the book *Muzyka v tvorčestve Valerija Brjusova*, "Iskusstvo", 1923 No. 3–4. She was a musicologist and an art scholar who wrote many interesting works. She had also been Taneev's student when she studied in Moscow Conservatory. In 1906–16 she taught in Moscow Conservatory, in 1921–43 she was a professor of theory and folklore and in 1918–1929 she worked in Narkompros.

Brjusov, Valerij (1873–1942) Russian Symbolist poet.

Buckoj, Anatolij K. (1892–1965) Soviet musicologist and a doctor of arts who studied in the Kiev Conservatory.

Vvedenskij, Aleksandr Ivanovič (1856–1925) Russian neo-Kantian philosopher and psychologist.

Cassirer, Ernst (1874–1945) German philosopher.

Cherubini, Luigi (1760–1842) Italian composer.

Croce, Benedetto (1866–1952) Italian philosopher.

Dargomyžkij, Aleksandr Sergejevič (1813–1869) Russian composer.

Deržanovskij, Vladimir (1881–1942) musicologist who worked as an editor in *Muzyka*.

Drigo, Riccardo E. (1846–1930) Italian compositor and a director, who lived over forty years in Russia.

Druskin, Mihail Semjonovič (1905–1991) Soviet musicologist, teacher. He was Asaf'ev's student in the Institute of Art and History in Leningrad. He fought on behalf of "modernism" and wrote a book *New Piano Music* (1928) which was charged among the other works in 1948.

Engel', Julij Dmitrievič (1868–1927) musical critic and a compositor. He was one of the organizers of the Folk Conservatory in Moscow in 1906. Since 1920 he lived in emigration abroad.

Fichte, Johan Gottlieb (1762–1814) German philosopher.

Ginzburg, Semjon L'vovič (1901–1978) Soviet musicologist and a teacher who was one of the pupils of Asaf'ev in the Institute of Arts History in Leningrad. He was a very active functionary in new the field of new music.

Gippius Vasilej V. (1890–1942) Russian poet, translator, critic and an literature scholar.

Gippius, Zinaida (1869–1945) Russian poetess.

Glazunov, Aleksandr (1865–1936) Russian composer, director and a professor at the St. Petersburg Conservatory, whose influence at the Conservatory and his pupils was remarkable. He immigrated to France in 1928.

Glier, Rejnhol'd Moricevič (1874–1956) composer and a director and a professor of Kiev Conservatory (1913–1920) and Moscow Conservatory (1920–1941) a director of the Kiev Conservatory since 1914. He finished the Moscow Conservatory in 1900 where he was a student of Tanejev and Arenskij. He was a member of Belajevskij circle in Petrograd in 1900–1901. Glier was a teacher of Prokof'ev and Mjaskovskij at the Moscow Conservatory. He worked with the Red Army after the Revolution and in Narkompros in 1920–22. Glier was a member of ethnographic section of Moscow Proletkult.

Glinka, Mikhail (1804–1857) at least spiritually the most important Russian composer. Glinka is said to have been the father of Russian classical music.

Gluck, Christopher Willibald (1714–1787) German composer.

Gorki, Maksim (Aleksej Maksimovič Peškov) (1868–1936) famous Russian and Soviet writer.

Gruber, Roman Soviet musicologist.

Hegel, Georg Wilhelm Friedrich (1770–1831) German philosopher.

Hindemith, Paul (1895–1963) German composer and music theoretician.

Hruštšev, Nikita (1894–1979) Soviet politician.

Ejhenbaum, Boris Mihajlovič (1886–1959) historian and a literature theoretician who taught at the University of Leningrad (1918–1949) and at the Leningrad Institute of Art History.

Engels, Friedrich (1820–1895) German social philosopher and one of the leading socialist theoreticians.

Ždanov, Andrej (1896–1948) Soviet politician and a People's Commissar of Education during the Stalin period.

Ivanov, Vjačeslav (1866–1949) Russian poet.

Ivanov-Boreckij Mihail V. (1874–1936) Muscovite historian, theoretician, teacher, composer and a professor at the Moscow Conservatory since 1922. He organized the scientific-research department. In 1929–1930 he was the head of theoretic-historical faculty.

Jakobson, Roman (1896–1982) Russian (Muscovite) linguist.

Jakubinskij, Lev (1892–1945) Russian philologist.

Javorskij, Boleslav (1877–1942) graduated from musical school in Kiev where he studied under V. V. Puhalskij (1848–1933). Javorskij graduated from Moscow Conservatory in 1903. The original music-theoretical concepts of Javorskij, which he developed through his lifetime, were formed already in 1899: *The Theory of Modal Rhythm*, which was named afterwards as a theory of *Musical Thought*. His treatise of *Construction of Musical Speech* was published in 1908.

Kant, Immanuel (1724–1804) German philosopher.

Kastal'skij, Aleksandr Dimitrievič (1856–1926) composer specialized in choir and folklore. (Student of Čajkovskij, Tanejev and N. A. Gubert in the Moscow Conservatory). From 1910 he was a director of the Moscow Synod School (from 1918 Public Choir Academy of Moscow). In 1918–1926 he worked actively in Narkompros, Proletkult, Politprosvet and in the Military registration. Since 1922 Kastal'skij worked as a professor (of choir music) of the Moscow Conservatory.

Kaškin, Nikolaj Dmitrievič (1839–1920) musical critic and a pedagogue who had been a friend of Čajkovskij. He wrote articles to the following journals: *Moskovckie Vedmosti*, *Russkie Vedmosti*, *Artist*, *Russkaja Muzykal'naja Gazeta*, *Muzyka*, *Muzykal'nyj sovremennik*.

Konjus, Georgij Eduardovič (1862–1933) music theoretician, composer, critic and a pedagogue.

Kruglikov, Semjon (1851–1910) Russian musicologist and critic who belonged to the Balakirev circle. In 1898–1901 he was the director of music-dramaturgical school of Moscow Phillharmonic Society and later the director of the Synodal school of church singing. Propagandist of the works of the Mighty Five.

Kurth, Ernst (1886–1946) German music theoretician.

Laroš, German Avgustovič (1845–1904) Russian musicologist and critic. He was the professor of the theory and history of music in the Moscow and St. Petersburg Conservatories.

Legat, Nikolaj G. (1869–1937) academic ballet dancer and a teacher (ballet master) in the Marinskij Theater.

Lenin, Vladimir (1870–1924) Russian revolutionary politician, bolševik. The leader of the Russian Soviet Republic 1917–1922, leader of the USSR 1922–1924.

Linjova, Evgenia Eduardovna (1853–1919) contra-alto and a choirmaster, folklorist who collected folk songs. She had taken part in revolution acts in her youth and translated works of Marx and Engels. For that reason she was forced to emigration from Russia in 1890–96. Her ethnographic work was strongly supported by Stasov. She taught in the Moscow Conservatory since 1906.

Lipps, Theodor (1851–1914) a German philosopher and psychologist. In his opinion, philosophy was basically a *Geisterwissenschaft* and, respectively, logic, ethics and aesthetics were based on psychology.

Liszt, Franz (1811–1886) a Hungarian-Austrian composer.

Ljadov, Anatolij (1855–1914) a famous Russian composer and a teacher at the St. Petersburg Conservatory

Losskij, Nikolaj (1870–1965) a Russian philosopher who taught at the University of Leningrad.

Lully, Jean-Babtiste (1632–1687) a Italian composer who worked in France.

Lunačarskij Anatolij V. (1875–1933), art critic, journalist, amateur musician, political functionary and commissar of Education. Head of cultural policy during (1917–1929) when it was still relatively free and pluralistic. In his own words “Intelligent among bolševists and a bolševist among the intelligents.”

Lur'e, Arthur Sergejevič (Arthur Oscar Vincent Lourié) (1891–1966) composer, pianist and critic who was very active in the revolutionary activities and belonged to the “leftist blok” of artists who wanted to co-operate with the Bolševiks. Director of MUZO in 1918–1920. As a composer he was experimental and composed non-tonal music. His “ultra-modernists” views were soon opposed and he was replaced in 1921 in Muzo by the more moderate former Proletkult member Boris Krasin. Lur'e left the Soviet Union for good in 1922 settling down in Paris. Since 1940 dwelled in New York. (See Schwaz 1983, pp. 25–26; Krusanov 2003, pp. 7–29; Ferenc 2004, pp. 9–10.)

Majakovskij, Vladimir (1893–1930) Russian Futurist poet.

Malevič, Kasimir (1879–1935) Russian modernist painter.

Mallarmé, Stéphane (1842–1898) French Symbolist poet.

Marinetti Filippo (1876–1944) Italian poet, novelist and critic. He was a founder of Futurism (1909), and an eager advocate of Fascism.

Marx, Carl (1818–1883) German-born philosopher, economist and social critic.

Merežkovskij, Dmitrij (1866–1941) Russian writer.

Milhaud, Darius (1892–1974) French composer. After a short career in diplomace devoted to composition after the first world war. Since 1940 lived in California, USA.

Mjaskovski, Nikolaj (1881–1950) Russian/Soviet composer.

Mozart, Wolfgang Amadeus (1756–1791) Austrian composer.

Muradeli, Vano (1908–1970) Soviet (Armenian)composer. He studies in the Tbilisi Conservatory. He composed numerous songs and revolutionary hymns, and in the years of the second world war strongly supported with his works the Soviet Fatherland. He was twice granted the Stalin prize.

Musorgskij, Modest (1839–1881) one of the most well known Russian composer. Belonged to the Balakirev circle.

Nietzsche, Friedrich (1844–1900) German philosopher. Instead of Christian morality, he offered the Übermensch who lives above the slave moral. Nietzsche represented individualism, but his philosophy also includes elements of psychologism.

Nižinskij, Vaclav (1889–1950) ballet dancer and ballet master in the Marinskij Theatre. In 1909 he danced together with Anna Pavlova in the Marinskij Theatre a ballet number divertissement “Babočka” to Asaf'ev's music.

Ol'khovskij Aleksej Russian musicologist and a pupil of Boris Asaf'ev.

Orlova, Elena Mihajlovna (1908–1985) Soviet musicologist and a teacher at the Moscow and Leningrad Conservatory who remarkably contributed the study on Boris Asaf'ev.

Ostwald, Wilhelm (1853–1932) German chemist. Born in Riga, studied chemistry in the University of Tartu. In 1909 he was awarded the Nobel Prize in Chemistry for his work on catalysis, chemical equilibria and reaction velocities. In the field of philosophy, he developed his own theory of energetics.

Preobraženskij, Antonin Viktorovič (1870–1929) musicologist. Since 1898 he worked at the Moscow Synodal School and since 1902 in St. Petersburg in a choir ("Kapella"). He was a professor at the Leningrad Institute of Art History and at the Leningrad's Conservatory. He was interested in ancient Russian song and church music.

Prokof'ev, Sergej (1891–1953) Soviet composer. In his early years, he was close to the avant-gardism, but later his works included a variety of styles and elements.

Puškin, Aleksandr (1799–1837) Russian writer, the "father of Russian poetry"..

Repin, Ilja Emifovič (1844–1930) Russian Realist painter.

Rimskij-Korsakov, Andrej (1878–1940) Russian philosopher and musicologist, son of Nikolaj Rimskij-Korsakov.

Rimskij-Korsakov, Nikolaj (1844–1908) one of the most famous Russian composers, teacher at the St. Petersburg Conservatory and a member of well-known musical circle the "Mighty Five".

Roslavec, Nikolaj (1881-1944) Russian composer who developed an original tonal organization, close to dodecaphonia.

Sabanejev, Leonid Leonidovič (1881-1968) Russian composer, pianist and critic. A Student of Tanejev

Saussure, Ferdinand de (1875–1913) Swiss philologist and a linguist. He has been regarded as the founder of modern linguistics, since he tends to describe the exact structure of language. He started the structuralist tradition in linguistics, and some see early elements of semiotics in his works.

Schopenhauer, Arthur (1788–1850) German philosopher. He developed his gnoseology on the basis of Kantian transcendental philosophy. The main work consisted of gnoseology, metaphysics or philosophy of nature, aesthetics and ethics.

Schumann Robert (1810–1856) German composer. One of the most famous Romantic composers of the first half of the 19th century. An intellectual as well as an aesthete, his music, more than any other composer, reflects the deep personal nature of Romanticism

Schönberg, Arnold (1874–1951) Austrian composer. His twelve tone serial technique was a distinguishing feature of 20th century music and today is regarded as a modern classic. He was a 1926 professor of composition at the academy of music in Berlin. He emigrated to the US via France in 1933 and taught at the University of California.

Serov, Aleksandr (1820–1871) famous Russian art critic of the 19th century.

Shakespeare, William (1564–1616) English playwright.

Skrjabin, Aleksandr (1872–1915) Russian "Symbolist" composer. Professor in the Moscow Conservatory

Sollertinskij, Ivan (1902–1944) Soviet musicologist. A pupil of Asaf'ev.

Solov'ev, Vladimir (1853–1900) famous Russian thinker, poet and a philosopher. Major influence on the second generation of Symbolists.

Stasov, Vladimir (1824–1906) the most famous Russian art critic of 19<sup>th</sup> Century. Friend of the Balakirec circle and propagandist of their music. He fought against academism in art, supporting realist way of thought.

Stalin, Josif (1879–1953) Soviet politician and a famous tyrant.

Stravinskij, Igor (1882–1971) Russian composer. Before the first world war he left Russia for Paris, since 1939 lived in the USA. A quintessentially cosmopolitan Russian, Stravinsky was one of the most authoritative composers in 20th century music, both in the West and in his native land.

Strek'nikov, Nikolaj Mihajlovič (born Menzenkamp-Strel'nikov) (1888–1939) Russian composer, music critic and a director. He is known as one of the founders of Soviet operet. He also had a career as a jurist in the field of the labor law.

Suvčinskij, Pjotr P. (1892–1985) Russian musicologist. He founded a journal *Muzykal'nyj Sovremennik* with A. Rimskij-Korsakov. His articles were published in *Melos*. Emigrated in 1920 to Paris.

Tanejev, Sergej (1856–1915) Russian composer, music theoretician and teacher. A major influence on the generations of Russian musicians.

Tjulin, Jurij (1893–1978) Soviet musicologist, teacher and a composer.

Tynjanov, Juri (1894–1943) Russian Soviet prosaist.

Vvedenskij, Aleksandr Ivanovič (1856–1925) Russian neo-Kantian philosopher and psychologist.

Čajkovskij, Pjotr (1840–1893) Russian composer.

Čerepin, Nikolaj Nikolajevič (1873–1945) composer, director and a pedagogue who from the juridical faculty of University of St. Petersburg and St. Petersburg's Conservatory. He worked as a director at the Marinskij during 1906–1909. He was a member of *Beljaev circle* and *Večera sovremennoj muzyki* [The Evenings of Contemporary Music]. He also contributed the group *Mir Isskustva* and founded the Tbilisi Conservatory. Čerepin emigrated in 1921 and founded a Russian Conservatory in Paris in 1925.

Šaljapin, Fedor (1873–1938) world famous bass singer at the Marinskij Theater. Friend of Stasov, etc.

Šklovskij, Viktor (1893–1984) Russian Formalist scholar and prosaist.

Šostakovič (1906–1975) one of the foremost modern Soviet composers, pianist.

Ščerbačev, Vladimir (1889–1952) Soviet musicologist, director and composer. Functioned once also as the head of St. Petersburg Union of composers.

Trotsky, Lev Davydovič (born Bronštejn) (1879–1940) Russian politician and a writer. Moved from the Menševik faction to Bolsheviks around 1917. Contradictions with Stalin led to exile, until Stalin's agents murdered him in Mexico.

### List of Journals

*Muzyka* [Music] a Muscovite weekly musical journal that appeared in 1910. Asaf'ev started his career as a music critic writing to that journal first. One of the redactors was his old friend from Conservatory Nikolaj Jakovlevič Mjaskovskij.

*Muzykal'nyj Sovremennik* [Musical Contemporary] a musical journal edited by Andrej Rimskij-Korsakov.

*Žhizn' Isskustva* [Life of Art] the official journal of Narkompros.

*K Novim Beregam* a Muscovite journal (1923)

*Oktjabr i revolucija* [October and Revolution] (1927) a journal of LASM

*Muzykal'naja kul'tura* [Musical Culture] a journal published by ASM and edited by Rozlavec. Three numbers were published in 1924.

*Sovremennaja muzyka* [Contemporary Music] a journal published by ASM. Established in 1924 and abandoned in 1929 after thirty numbers had appeared.

*Muzykal'naja Nov'* [Virgin Soil of Music] a journal published by RAPM in 1923–24

*Muzyka i Oktjabr'* [Music and October] a journal published by RAPM in 1926

*Muzyka i Revoljucija* [Music and Revolution] a journal published by ORKMID in 1926–1929. Initially edited by Lev Šul'gin.

*Muzikal'noe obrazovanie* [Musical Education] a journal published by the Moscow Conservatory in 1926–1930. It was proclaimed as an independent journal of intelligentsia.

*Proletarskij muzykant* [Proletarian Musicant] a journal published by RAPM in 1929–1932.

*Za proletarskuju muzyku* [For Proletarian Music] a popular journal published by RAPM in 1930–1932

*Sovetskaja muzyka* [Soviet Music] a monthly journal of Soviet Composers' Union in 1933–1992, After the year of 1992 the journal has appeared every third month and renamed as *Muzikal'naja Akademia*.

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