

EDITORIAL

Receiving **Sasha Mäkilä's** request to publish a special Gazeta issue — a themed publication focusing on Russia / the Soviet Union from a musicological and cultural perspective — we were primarily enthusiastic at the prospect of including more writing on music. Yet, considering the instrumentalisation of music as an instrument of soft power, particularly by Russia, we were also a bit hesitant to cover such a sensitive medium that is simultaneously imbued with historical, social, cultural and political implications. Music's ability to evoke emotions leaves it vulnerable to exploitation as it is an ideal means to convey ideological messaging. As contemporary post-Soviet politics is increasingly characterised by a distinct turn towards traditional and cultural values that form a shield of cultural sovereignty against international intrusion, music as a sociocultural entity seems more relevant than ever. Classical music as cultural statecraft is embedded in the identity politics of the Russian state as it seeks to entrench itself as an international defender of traditional values, especially across the post-Soviet sphere where it seeks to remain influential. It is difficult to imagine modern repertoires of philharmonic performances without the contributions of **Tchaikovsky, Rachmaninov, Stravinsky** and **Prokofiev**. Yet, it is equally difficult to consider the absence of Soviet composers, including **Asafiev, Khrennikov** and **Solovyov-Sedoy**. Focusing on the post-Soviet sphere by highlighting the significance of Russian musical contributions risks a glorification of Russian cultural values used to legitimise transnational authoritarian repression. While an edition on the Soviet Union from a musicological perspective necessitates acknowledgment of vast Russian contributions, it must remain embedded in a recognition of music's capacities to corrupt.

Still, in drawing attention to negative implications of music in the post-Soviet

sphere this issue hopes to root its concerns in an acknowledgement of the great potential of musicological research in the region. The very ability of music to evoke affect that leaves it vulnerable to exploitation, synchronously elevates it as a means to achieve cultural change beyond a focus on authoritarian traditionalism. Music, its style of performance and tone all revoke subjective imaginations of the audience, leaving it unable to be fully controlled by any political actor. Beyond this, music can be a coping strategy. Music can be a language that connects people to other worlds as a form of escapism. When talking to Ukrainian friends, who are quite embedded in musical practice, they have continually emphasised that music enables them to bypass the complexities of verbal communication. Music remains available to everyday people to stay in touch with their emotions and feelings regardless of the vast material and spiritual losses of the war. In this regard, it ceases to be politicised as music is conceptualised as an everpresent, unnoticeable part of our everyday world that values honesty above all, as any dishonesty falters in the musical world.

In compiling this edition we have attempted to be attentive to both the concerns of musicological research and its transformative potential by representing a breadth of approaches to the field. Before introducing the articles, we do wish to note that this is a bilingual publication, with articles written in both Finnish and English.

First, **Simo Mikkonen** provides an introduction to the field of research for those who are unfamiliar by examining recent developments in researching Soviet musicology from Finland. Sasha Mäkilä traces the remnants of Russian and Soviet conducting pedagogy in Finland. **Kristiina Silvan** analyses the Mikkeli Music Festival as a case of cultural cooperation that indirectly enables Russian



soft power. **Maria Konoshenko** explores how émigré Russian musicians renegotiate identity and performance language choices in response to the war in Ukraine. **Kara Koskinen** interprets **Shostakovich's** *Leningrad Symphony* as a complex vehicle of Soviet and later Russian patriotic narratives. **Della Pirrie** investigates how language and listener comprehension shape meaning in Soviet popular music, framed through an analysis of a 1979 film score written by the Estonian composer **Sven Grünberg**. Finally, **Pekka Vihervirta** traces the balalaika's use beyond a musical instrument, but as a symbol shaped by political and ideological uses.

We wish to thank all the authors for their contributions, and also the Cultura Foundation, whose grant from the 150th Anniversary Fund for the Finnish Parliament made it possible to realise this edition. Furthermore, we wish to extend our appreciation to **Ellen Heikkilä** for her work in creating the lay-out of this issue, that will enable us to not only have a well-curated online issue, but also a printed publication that is to be released later. Most importantly, we wish to thank Sasha Mäkilä who commissioned this edition, contacted all the authors and essentially initiated this entire project. We truly hope the articles spark some thought and reflections on the vast multitudes of meaning contained within music, its study and its implications in the post-Soviet sphere.



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