

# **Opera After Stalin**

***Rodion Shchedrin and the Search for the  
Voice of a New Era***

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Thesis submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

Word count: 99,757

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## Abstract

Until recently, Russian opera after Stalin has been an almost entirely neglected topic. In this thesis, I analyse the development of operatic style and culture in Russia between 1953-2020 by examining four operas by the most prominent late Soviet and post-Soviet composer, Rodion Shchedrin, and by bringing these operas into conversation with those of his peers during each phase of his career. Mining previously untapped archival sources, I set opera in dialogue with aspects of Soviet cultural history, engaging with the central themes that have occupied scholars of the late Soviet and post-Soviet periods: Socialist Realism, modernism, consumer culture, relations with the West, political ideology, Soviet morality, religious revival, and negotiations with power and censorship. In Chapter 1, I address the re-formation of operatic standards during the Thaw, using the bizarre production history of Shchedrin's first opera, *Not Love Alone* (1961) as a case study. Chapter 2 explores the operatic culture of the 1970s, identifying four major camps of composers: the 'officials', the 'rebels', the revival of 1920s modernism, and the fourth way – Shchedrin, and his opera *Dead Souls* (1976). Chapter 3 probes the fault lines of Perestroika exploiting the lens of Shchedrin's third opera, *Lolita* (1989-1994), and examines the musical and professional fate of composers navigating this transition. In Chapter 4, I analyse Russian opera in the twenty-first century. First, I expose the contemporary culture of censorship that has developed in the past two decades, and its effect on opera; next, I chronicle the formation of a new style in Russian opera that is both national and divergent from trends in Western opera: 'Russianist Realism'. I demonstrate how Shchedrin's adaptability, which helped him thrive in the Soviet era, has enabled him to meet the demands of a new political moment, and rise to a position of prominence among living Russian composers. Ultimately, I hope this thesis will contribute to the growing literature addressing the need for closer scrutiny of Soviet life and culture after Stalin, and especially, that it will spark new interest in late Soviet and post-Soviet opera.

## Acknowledgements

I am grateful to my two supervisors, Professors Jonathan Cross and Philip Bullock, for guiding me throughout this journey. To Jonathan, I am thankful for his incisive musical advice, and his persistence in challenging me to become a more rigorous thinker and writer over the last four years. To Philip, I am indebted for his ever-timely responses to any question on any topic (I am hard pressed to find a book he has not read), and for his encouragement of me and his belief in this project.

This project would not have been possible without the collaboration of Rodion Shchedrin himself. His kindness, humility, and sense of humour have made this process a joy.

I am grateful to the friends who have walked by my side, particularly, to those who stepped beyond the call of duty to support me since my father's diagnosis of ALS in 2019. In alphabetical order, I think of Ann Reynolds, Daniel Judt, Frankie Knight, Sasha Rasmussen, and Shelly Moore.

I am also grateful to Karen Kamensek for her generosity of time and spirit in reading every word of this manuscript.

Finally, to my family, no words are sufficient to thank them. Some of my earliest childhood memories feature my father surrounded by mugs of coffee and stacks of books and papers in his windowless, closet-sized office in our Moscow apartment. He was working on a mysterious thing called a *Kandidatstvo* (dissertation). As early as four years old, I remember sitting on the floor, with him explaining concepts to me as complex as the Trinity and the Russian revolution. I'm sure I didn't understand a tenth of what he said, but what I did understand was the thrill of gaining knowledge and seeking truth that he exuded. It was a quest I could not wait to join. Thanks, dad, for inviting me into the adventure. While my father wrote, my mother surrounded us with joy and laughter – often in the form of music. She ensured that the abstract search for truth was always grounded in love for those around us, which she poured out at every moment.

*To my father, who taught me to love Russia*

*To my mother, who taught me to love music*

## Front Matter

### Transliteration:

I transliterate Russian words using the Library of Congress system, except in the instance of well-known examples with established spellings in English. In the body of the text, for example, I use Piotr Tchaikovsky (rather than Chaikovskii), Dmitry (rather than Dmitrii), Bolshoi (rather than Bol'shoi), and Prokofiev (rather than Prokof'ev). While the body of the text includes these modifications for the sake of readability, the footnotes follow the Library of Congress system.

### Archival sources:

RGALI: Russian State Archive of Literature and Arts

Sources from RGALI are categorised by *fond*, *opis'*, and *edinitsa khraneniia*. The *fond* refers to a general category, usually an organisation or person, such as Ministry of Culture or Rodion Shchedrin, while the *opis'* encompasses a year or topic, which could include thousands of documents. The *edinitsa khraneniia* refers to a particular file. Within those files, pages are numbered. I have included an index of the titles of all of the files I consulted in the bibliography.

### Translation:

Unless otherwise stated, all translations are by the author.

## Introduction: The Shchedrin Problem

Soviet opera died with Joseph Stalin. This is the false assumption that has long presided over Soviet opera studies, and it is no wonder: there is not a single comprehensive, scholarly study on opera from his death in 1953 until the present – nearly seven decades. Despite the fact that operatic life was arguably even more vibrant during the late and post-Soviet periods than in the early years, until very recently, the period spanning the October Revolution of 1917 until the end of Stalin’s terror has dominated both performance and scholarship. The operatic scandals involving Stalin and Dmitry Shostakovich, for example, are all too well known. If you were to ask a well versed opera-lover to name a Soviet opera, they would probably respond with Shostakovich’s *Ledi Makbet Mtsenskogo uezda* (*Lady Macbeth of the Mtsensk District*), which has become the most frequently performed and popular of Soviet operas today: between 2009 and 2019 alone, it received at least 375 performances globally, more than three times the number of performances of its closest Soviet competitor, Sergei Prokofiev’s *Ognennyi angel* (*The Fiery Angel*).<sup>1</sup> Or they might respond with Prokofiev’s *Voina i mir* (*War and Peace*), which enjoys better name recognition because of its literary heritage, despite boasting a fraction of the number of performances (thirty-seven as opposed to 105).<sup>2</sup> Were the question expanded to symphonies, the answers would likely be Shostakovich’s fifth and tenth symphonies, or Prokofiev’s first, known as the Classical Symphony.<sup>3</sup> These frequently performed pieces were all composed before 1953 – the year, of course, when both Prokofiev and Stalin died on the

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<sup>1</sup> Statistics provided by Operabase, <https://www.operabase.com/statistics/en>, Accessed 11.03.2020. I say ‘at least’ because Operabase statistics are a useful guideline, but almost inevitably incomplete. For a relevant and more detailed global performance history of *Lady Macbeth of the Mtsensk District*, see also Rüdiger Haußmann, *Dmitri Schostakowitschs Opera 'Lady Macbeth von Mzensk' ('Katerina Ismailowa') und ihre Inszenierungen* (Berlin: Studia Slavica Musicologica, 2011).

<sup>2</sup> Statistics provided by Operabase, <https://www.operabase.com/statistics/en>, Accessed 11.03.2020.

<sup>3</sup> While there are no curated data on the frequency of symphonies performed worldwide that I have found, a perusal of the top twenty orchestras and their concert programmes of the last decade support this suggestion.

same day. The result of this fixation with only a small proportion of Soviet music is that late Soviet opera remains practically unknown.

The scholarly silence about post-1953 Soviet opera might suggest that there was not much activity or development in this later period. On the contrary: taking the Bolshoi Theatre in Moscow as an example, the number of performances only increased after the 1950s, as did the number of commissions for new productions and world premieres.<sup>4</sup> Ministry of Culture records reveal avid pursuit of new productions, revivals of old ones, and a quest to gain larger audiences in theatres across the entire USSR.<sup>5</sup> In 1970, there was only one new production at the Bolshoi (Prokofiev's *Semyon Kotko*), but in other years, there were two or more, and sometimes as many as seven; for example, in 1975 the theatre created four new opera productions and three new ballets, and in 1976 four new ballets and three new operas (in the latter category, all world premieres), a significant achievement for any opera house.<sup>6</sup> There was certainly a great deal of activity. But even if there was activity, could the state-supported opera apparatus of the sluggish, late Soviet period have produced anything noteworthy? If the so-called 'dissident' or 'avant-garde' composers were not writing operas, who was left? These are questions and categories that I investigate in this chapter, revealing the late Soviet political and artistic landscapes, and the continued tensions between music and power, to be fraught, complex, and demanding of further study.

This dissertation contributes to the growing literature on post-Stalin musical culture from the Thaw, through the Stagnation and Perestroika, to the entire post-Soviet period by engaging in a study of opera from 1953 to 2020. I anchor my investigation around the most successful operatic composer of this era: Rodion Shchedrin. There are several persuasive reasons for choosing Shchedrin as a Virgil. Born in 1932, Shchedrin has been consistently

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<sup>4</sup> RGALI, f. 648, op. 19, ed.kh 327.

<sup>5</sup> RGALI, f. 2329 op. 22, ed.kh. 1714.

<sup>6</sup> RGALI, f. 2329 op. 23, ed.kh. 661, 40-1.

composing operas over a longer stretch of time than any other Soviet and Russian composer. His seven operas span fifty-four years of Soviet and post-Soviet history, from 1961 to 2015, and were written under the varied gazes of Russian leaders including Nikita Khrushchev, Leonid Brezhnev, Mikhail Gorbachev, Dmitry Medvedev, and Vladimir Putin (if his ballets are counted, Stalin's name could be included too). Few other Soviet composers could claim success this diverse and this consistent, and for a duration of over sixty years. Those who come the closest include Edison Denisov, who composed three operas between 1959 and 1981; Alfred Schnittke, whose operas were written between 1990 and 1994; Mieczyslaw Weinberg, who created three operas between 1967 and 1994; and Leonid Desiatnikov, whose four operas span 1976 to 2005. Shchedrin both preceded and outlived all but of them (except the much younger Desiatnikov, who is still composing).

But Shchedrin is also a complex figure. On the one hand, he was an 'official' composer, a winner of the Soviet system: from 1958 he was married to leading Bolshoi Theatre ballerina Maya Plisetskaya; from 1962 he held the position of Secretary of the Board of the Union of Composers of the USSR, and then replaced Shostakovich as Secretary of the Union of Composers of the RSFSR in 1973; he held a position at Moscow Tchaikovsky Conservatory from 1964-1969; he has won numerous state awards, including the State Prize of the USSR in 1972, the Lenin Prize in 1984, and the Order of Honour from Putin in 2017. On the other hand, unlike any of his 'official' peers, his appeal is also international: commissions for operas have come from the New York Philharmonic, Chicago Symphony Orchestra, the Paris Opera, and even from a Tokyo-based production company that commissioned a musical in Japanese. The tensions between Shchedrin's undeniable international success and longevity, and his official status in the Soviet Union and contemporary Russia, render his career a fascinating case study in the balancing act of music and power in Soviet and post-Soviet Russia. As Richard Taruskin has noted, the Soviet system provided a series of 'affordances', that is, 'environmental

possibilities for action' which, if navigated correctly, could offer success to any composer.<sup>7</sup> Shchedrin's skilful navigation of these affordances provides ripe opportunity to examine his music, his career, and the personal and professional characteristics that allowed him to rise to prominence in these environments.

## Central Questions

What became of operatic style and culture in Russia between 1953 and 2020, and more specifically, how did Shchedrin's work accord with or depart from the trends that emerged? Indeed, how did it even shape those trends? These are the central questions of this thesis.

In seeking to answer these questions, I set opera in a productive dialogue with aspects of Soviet cultural history, and trace three consistent threads through the composer's career: the aesthetic, the political, and the social. I follow Shchedrin's life through the precarious early days of the Thaw (*otpepel'*) in the late 1950s and early 1960s, his productive period of composition during the so-called 'Stagnation' (*zastoi*) of the 1970s, through the chaos of Perestroika, and into the Boris Yeltsin and Putin eras. Throughout the rapidly shifting political and cultural landscape, I chart how Shchedrin emerges as a figure who managed these complexities with conspicuous success – from success under Stalin, to success in Germany and the United States in the 1980s and 1990s, to success back in modern Russia. In so doing, I supplement my examination of Shchedrin as an artist, and of his art itself, with 'the grittier subject' of his career – as Taruskin would put it – as a lens to understand the shifting relationship between music and power in this period.<sup>8</sup> How he negotiated this balance serves as another driving question throughout this thesis. These questions prompt me to engage with the central themes that have occupied scholars of the late Soviet period for decades, including Socialist Realism, modernism,

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<sup>7</sup> Richard Taruskin, 'Two Serendipities. Keynoting a Conference, "Music and Power"' *The Journal of Musicology* 33, no. 3 (2016): 401-31. 431.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*

consumer culture, relations with the West, political ideology, negotiations with power and censorship, Soviet morality, religious revival, and neoconservatism and nationalism.<sup>9</sup>

This study examines four of Shchedrin's operas, each as a distinctive work rooted in the aesthetic and philosophical particularities of its historical moment. I couple close reading of the music and texts of Shchedrin's operas with comparisons to the operas of his contemporaries, and with a contextualisation of the trends in art and in politics that formed his environment and that he, in turn, formed. Each chapter, however, requires its own combination of methods because of the variety and inconsistency of the types of material available. In the early chapters, situated in the 1960s and 1970s, I examine a plethora of primary sources – particularly from the archives of the Bolshoi Theatre, the Composers' Union, and Shchedrin's personal collection – to provide nuanced historical contextualisation and new perspectives on the political intrigues and pressures for composers of opera in these decades. I combine these methods with close readings of his scores, in which I emphasise the surprising and deep influence of European modernism on Shchedrin's operas of the 1970s and 1980s. Since he also served as his own librettist for six out of seven of his operas, I also include analysis of his adaptation techniques, examining his revisions of classic texts of Russian literature. To study

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<sup>9</sup> For a sampling of works that engage these themes, see: Edwin Bacon and Mark Sandle, *Brezhnev Reconsidered* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002); Christopher J. Ward, *Brezhnev's Folly: The Building of BAM and Late Soviet Socialism* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2009); Birgit Beumers, *Russia's New Fin de Siècle* (Bristol: Intellect, 2002); Birgit Beumers, *Nikita Mikhailov: Between Nostalgia and Nationalism* (London: IBTauris & CoLtd, 2005); Stephen V. Bittner, *The Many Lives of Khrushchev's Thaw: Experience and Memory in Moscow's Arbat* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2008); Stephen J. Collier, *Post-Soviet Social: Neoliberalism, Social Modernity, Biopolitics* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2011); Octavian Esanu, *Transition in Post-Soviet Art: The Collective Actions Group Before and After 1989* (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2012); Christina Ezrahi, *Swans of the Kremlin: Ballet and Power in Soviet Russia* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2012); Sheila Fitzpatrick, *Tear off the Masks!: Identity and Imposture in Twentieth-Century Russia* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005); V. A. Kozlov, *Mass Uprisings in the USSR: Protest and Rebellion in the Post-Stalin Years* (London: Routledge, 2015); Walter Laqueur, *The Dream That Failed: Reflections on the Soviet Union* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995). M. R. Zezina, *Sovetskaia khudozhestvennaia intelligentsiia i vlast' v 1950-e - 60-e gody* (Moscow: Dialog MGU, 1999); Jarrett Zigon, *Making the New Post-Soviet Person: Moral Experience in Contemporary Moscow* (Boston: Brill, 2010). Masha Gessen, *The Future Is History: How Totalitarianism Reclaimed Russia* (London: Granta, 2018). Eleonory Gilburd, *To See Paris and Die: The Soviet Lives of Western Culture* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2018).

the operas of the 1990s and 2000s, however, other methods are required to supplement the historical contextualisation, since archival material becomes a less fruitful and less available resource. A study of his later works provides an opportunity to mine insights from reception, criticism, recent government policy documents, and interviews. Finally, in my focus on the operas of Shchedrin and his contemporaries between 2012 and 2020, I include analysis of production details to provide a picture of the overall operatic aesthetic that has developed in contemporary Russia, and speculate about where that development might lead.

### **Expanding on Precedent**

In using cultural history to shed light on Russian opera – and the reverse, using opera to illuminate Russian cultural history – I follow a rich and productive tradition of scholarship, and bring that tradition to bear on late Soviet opera. In the volume that began this trend, *Opera and Drama in Russia as Preached and Practiced in the 1860s* (1981), Taruskin aimed to affix ‘the emergent Russian operatic school and its aesthetic moorings within the broader context of Russian intellectual history.’<sup>10</sup> Taruskin’s careful mapping of the historical and philosophical influences of each composer, combined with musical analysis, launched a trend that has informed the methods of many subsequent scholars.<sup>11</sup> Even closer to the structure of my project is Boris Gasparov’s *Five Operas and a Symphony: Word and Music in Russian Culture* (2005), in which he explained that each of the works he selected, ‘serves as a vantage point for a tableau reflecting a certain moment in Russian history ... [which] together add up to a coherent story

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<sup>10</sup> Richard Taruskin, *Russian Opera and Drama in Russia as Preached and Practiced in the 1860s* (Rochester: University of Rochester Press, 1981), xiv, xvi.

<sup>11</sup> Caryl Emerson is just one who has engaged in work of equal depth and scope. See Caryl Emerson, *Modest Musorgsky and Boris Godunov: Myths, Realities, Reconsiderations* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994). Emily Fray has usefully built upon Emerson’s work in a number of recent articles focusing on the literary and historical roots of terrorism in *Boris Godunov*. See Emily Frey, ‘Boris Godunov and the Terrorist’, *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 70, no. 1 (2017): 129–69. Also Emily Frey, ‘Rimsky-Korsakov, Snegurochka, and Populism’ in *Rimsky-Korsakov and His World*, ed. Marina Frolova-Walker (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2018): 63-96.

of ideological and aesthetic trends as they evolved over more than a century'.<sup>12</sup> In his study of five nineteenth-century operas, Gasparov concentrated on revealing cultural trends within the music, and in turn, on showing music – especially opera – to be a formative force in culture.<sup>13</sup> In a work of similar scope but more philosophical inclination, *Russian Opera and the Symbolist Movement* (2002, revised 2019), Simon Morrison revealed the common undercurrents of Symbolist poetics in four radically different operas of the Silver Age and the way they 'shared a conception of the musical symbol as a motion-filled, mediating device' despite aesthetic divergences.<sup>14</sup> More recently, Rutger Helmers has explored cultural essentialism and definitions of musical 'Russianness' in his *Not Russian Enough? Nationalism and Cosmopolitanism in Nineteenth-Century Russian Opera* (2014).<sup>15</sup> Unlike Gasparov, Helmers focused primarily on the scores of four different operas and on the writings of the composers, but largely ignored the staging and production details. Similarly, Nathan Seinen's work on Prokofiev's last four operas provides rich historical detail on their original contexts during the height of high Stalinism, as well as offering new interpretations of several of the scores.<sup>16</sup> A study which is simultaneously more expansive and more focused is, however, Tamara Levitz's 2012 *Modernist Mysteries: Persephone*, which she calls a 'microhistorical' study of this failed production of Stravinsky's mixed-genre composition.<sup>17</sup> Staggering in its detail and scope, it is also an exercise in historical empathy that treats the artists as complex, self-contradictory

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<sup>12</sup> Boris Gasparov, *Five Operas and a Symphony: Word and Music in Russian Culture* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005), xxii.

<sup>13</sup> The operas he included are the following: Mikhail Glinka's *Ruslan i Liudmila* (*Ruslan and Ludmila*), Modest Musorgsky's *Khovanshchina* and *Boris Godunov*, Petr Tchaikovsky's *Evgenii Onegin* (*Eugene Onegin*) and *Pikovaia dama* (*Queen of Spades*).

<sup>14</sup> Simon Morrison, *Russian Opera and the Symbolist Movement* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002; second ed. 2019), 308. The operas he included are the following: Tchaikovsky's *Queen of Spades*, Rimsky-Korsakov's *Legenda o nevidimom grade Kitezhe i deve Fevronii* (*The Legend of the Invisible City of Kitezh and the Maiden Fevroniia*), Scriabin's unfinished *Mysterium* (not, in fact, an opera at all), and Prokofiev's *The Fiery Angel*.

<sup>15</sup> Rutger Helmers, *Not Russian Enough?: Nationalism and Cosmopolitanism in Nineteenth-Century Russian Opera* (Rochester: University of Rochester Press, 2014). The operas he focuses on are: Glinka's *Zhizn' za tsaria* (*A Life for the Tsar*), Aleksandr Serov's *Iudit* (*Judith*), Tchaikovsky's *Orleanskaia deva* (*The Maid of Orleans*), and Rimsky-Korsakov's *Tsarskaia nevesta* (*The Tsar's Bride*).

<sup>16</sup> Nathan Seinen, *Prokofiev's Soviet Operas* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019).

<sup>17</sup> Tamara Levitz, *Modernist Mysteries: Perséphone* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 21.

people, while simultaneously using each as a case study to re-evaluate modernist neoclassicism.<sup>18</sup> This empathetic, microhistorical approach Levitz affords her subjects is one I hope I have incorporated into my examination of Shchedrin, albeit over a longer period and a greater number of works.

This fruitful tradition of the cultural study of opera, however, has not yet extended beyond the lifetime of Prokofiev; there are no studies of this nature of post-Stalin Russian opera.<sup>19</sup> There are a few surveys in Russian, including an anthology of operas by Moscow composers in the second half of the twentieth century, but this is primarily an overview and brief composition history of the works rather than an analytical, cultural history like the ones described above.<sup>20</sup> In addition, there are a handful of books which serve as overviews of Soviet music; while all of these mention opera, none provides the robust context that would fit the precedent of Russian opera studies. Mark Aranovskii's general history of Russian music in the twentieth century, for example, provides a thorough overview of key composers and their outputs, and operas appear incidentally as part of their *oeuvres*.<sup>21</sup> The two other influential histories of Soviet music in English, Boris Schwarz's *Music and Musical Life in Soviet Russia* (1983) and Levon Hakobian's *Music of the Soviet Era* (1998, revised 2017), similarly mention operas in passing to fill in the landscape of their bird's-eye view of Soviet composers and their music.<sup>22</sup> Marina Frolova-Walker's and Patrick Zuk's volume on music since 1917 provides a

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<sup>18</sup> Ibid, 622.

<sup>19</sup> See Seinen's *Prokofiev's Soviet Operas* for another excellent study that stops short before the period I mention.

<sup>20</sup> A. Alekseeva and Rimma Kosacheva, *Antologiya opernogo tvorchestva moskovskikh kompozitorov: vtoraya polovina XX veka* (Moscow: Kompozitor, 2003).

<sup>21</sup> Mark Aranovskii, *Russkaia muzyka i XX vek: russkoe muzykal'noe iskusstvo v istorii khudozhestvennoi kul'tury XX veka* (Moscow: Gosudarstvennyi institut iskusstvovedeniia Ministerstva kul'tury Rossiiskoi federatsii, 1997).

<sup>22</sup> See Levon Hakobian, *Music of the Soviet Age, 1917-1987* (Stockholm: Melos, 1998), 319-26 and Levon Hakobian, *Music of the Soviet Era: 1917-1991* (London: Routledge, 2016), 326-30. There are many fine studies that have been done on the Stalin and pre-Stalin eras as well, which certainly serve as models in terms of method. See, for example, Marina Frolova-Walker, *Stalin's Music Prize* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2016). I might also mention Francis Maes' work here, which, though useful, ends at 1962. Francis Maes, *A History of Russian Music: From Kamarinskaya to Babi Yar* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002).

wealth of detail and analysis on a range of topics, but other than one chapter on the Stalinist opera project, it eschews both opera and the middle Soviet years; rather, it focuses mainly on the Stalin period, the post-Soviet period, and reappraising Soviet musicology in the post-Soviet age without a single chapter (out of eighteen) focused on elements of musical culture between 1953 and Perestroika.<sup>23</sup>

If late Soviet opera has been largely ignored, however, the study of late Soviet instrumental music has been recently invigorated, in large part thanks to the work of Peter Schmelz. In *Such Freedom, If Only Musical: Unofficial Music During the Thaw* (2009), Schmelz notes that unlike literature and visual arts, music during the Thaw had been almost entirely overlooked, and argues that it should not be: it offers an important counter-narrative to the Thaw in other art forms.<sup>24</sup> He set out to remedy this by studying the most prominent of the ‘unofficial’ composers, also known in the 1960s as the ‘young’ composers: Schnittke, Arvo Pärt, Sofia Gubaidulina, Edison Denisov, Andrei Volkonsky, and Valentin Silvestrov.<sup>25</sup> Schmelz consciously chose the term ‘unofficial’ rather than some of the more prevalent (but less accurate) terms such as ‘outsider’, ‘nonconformist’, ‘avant-garde’, or even ‘dissident’.<sup>26</sup> ‘Unofficial’ is a term that emphasises the power structures at the heart of Soviet life while also avoiding the mischaracterisation of these composers as dissident.<sup>27</sup> Since resistance and dissidence, he argues, were no longer straightforward or relevant categories for musicians in the Soviet 1960s, he demonstrates the need ‘to construct a more complex middle ground, considering a spectrum of possibilities for resistance’, a task he accomplishes persuasively.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> Patrick Zuk and Marina Frolova-Walker, eds., *Russian Music since 1917: Reappraisal and Rediscovery* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018).

<sup>24</sup> Peter Schmelz, *Such Freedom, If Only Musical: Unofficial Soviet Music during the Thaw* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 4.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, 7, 23.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, 20.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, 18. Shchedrin himself would agree that dissidence was not a straightforward category. See Rodion Konstantinovich Shchedrin, *Autobiographical Memories* (Mainz: Schott, 2012), 106-7.

He does, at times, touch on Shchedrin, though in passing since he does not consider Shchedrin to fit his classification of unofficial. His final assessment of the composer is diplomatic:

In the past decade he [Shchedrin] has become a widely played, widely commissioned genial composer of crowd-pleasing music, but he was sufficiently implicated in officialdom so that he is unable to trade in on the ‘new lies,’ while the unofficial composers cash in on the mystique generated by their supposed opposition to the Soviet state.<sup>29</sup>

He rightly points out that Shchedrin has not benefited from the overwrought, retrospective narratives of dissidence that the others have. I would contend, however, that there is much more to the stories of both his music and his reputation. First, I will demonstrate that Shchedrin has written just as much music in the past two decades that is *not* crowd-pleasing as music that is crowd-pleasing. Second, the fact that he was not initially able to trade in the ‘new lies’ has actually served him well in the Putin era, two phenomena I discuss in Chapter 4.

Overall, by illuminating the development of unofficial composition and concertgoing from Khrushchev’s Thaw to Brezhnev’s Stagnation, *Such Freedom* is an invaluable step toward exposing the particularities of music in the post-Stalin era, as is Schmelz’s volume on Schnittke’s *Concerto Grosso No. 1* (2019).<sup>30</sup> Several other valuable studies on late Soviet music include Ivana Medic’s work on the late Soviet symphony, which also deals with more ‘unofficial’ composers – Gubaidulina, Schnittke, Galina Ustvol’vskaia – as well as a recent scholarly biography on Weinberg.<sup>31</sup> In addition, Valeria Tsenova’s earlier volume on the ‘underground’ music of the USSR also focuses on late Soviet music, but without the nuance of Schmelz’s account: she features eighteen composers who she claims are the ‘most interesting and innovative’, but gives no justification for the selection criteria of this list. It is a diverse

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<sup>29</sup> Ibid, 334.

<sup>30</sup> Peter Schmelz, *Alfred Schnittke’s Concerto Grosso No. 1* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019).

<sup>31</sup> Ivana Medic, *From Polystylism to Meta-Pluralism: Essays on Late Soviet Symphonic Music* (Belgrade: Institute of Musicology, 2017). Alexander Ivashkin, *Alfred Schnittke* (London: Phaidon, 1996); David Fanning, *Mieczysław Weinberg: In Search of Freedom* (Hofheim: Wolke, 2010). Medic’s work on the concept of ‘moderated modernism’ in post-war Serbian music is also a welcome addition. See Ivana Medic, ‘The Ideology of Moderated Modernism in Serbian Music and Musicology’, *Muzikologija*, no. 7 (2007): 279-94.

group that could hardly all be classified as innovative, let alone underground (many wrote pieces they or the authorities considered Socialist Realist).<sup>32</sup> Shchedrin's name is conspicuously absent from the 'most interesting and innovative' composers, though his music, as I will demonstrate, is easily as sophisticated and norm-defying as many of those in this group.<sup>33</sup>

All of the aforementioned books on late Soviet music focus on instrumental music rather than opera, and on the margins rather than the mainstream. It is no accident that of the five unofficial composers Schmelz features in *Such Freedom*, only two of them wrote operas, and even these were not performed at the major theatres, nor is it a coincidence that a volume on underground music spares no place for opera: by its very nature, opera in the Soviet environment was 'official'. Since opera required a fully supported state apparatus to be produced, staged, and to reach audiences, the operas performed in the theatres of the Soviet Union were always representations of some degree of cooperation with the Soviet establishment. In that sense, therefore, the recent focus on the music of the margins precludes opera by definition. While much has been done in advancing unofficial music in the late Soviet years, therefore, late Soviet opera remains completely uncharted territory – in part, ironically, because of the very fact that it was mainstream.

### **Post-Stalinism Revisited**

Opera has not been the only neglected subject in late Soviet studies: until recently, the entire late Soviet period has been almost entirely ignored. It has only been in the last decade

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<sup>32</sup> Tsenova's edited volume includes chapters on Andrei Volkonsky, Philipp Gershkovich, Sergei Slonimskii, Boris Tishchenko, Valentin Sil'vestrov, Leonid Grabovskii, Nikolai Karetnikov, Alemdar Karamanov, Roman Ledenev, Viacheslav Artemov, Faradzh Karaev, Aleksandr Knaifel', Vladislav Shut, Aleksandr Vustin, Aleksandr Raskatov, Sergei Pavlenko, Vladimir Tarnopol'skii. V. Tsenova, *Underground Music from the Former USSR* (Amsterdam: Harwood Academic Publishers, 1997), vii-viii. See also Valeriia Tsenova, ed., *Muzyka iz byvshego SSSR: sbornik statei* (Moscow: Kompozitor, 1994).

<sup>33</sup> See descriptions of some of Shchedrin's innovations in I. Balázs: 'Rodion Sechtschedrin: *Die toten Seelen*: Opernszenen nach Gogol in 3 Aufzügen, 19 Bildern, Aspekte zum Problem der Operndramaturgie', *Melos*, 50 no. 1 (1988): 55–105. 58.

that the study of late Soviet Russia has moved from the margins to the centre of scholarly focus, after decades of almost exclusive attention on the Russian Revolution and Stalin era, as Denis Kozlov pointed out in his volume on the Thaw.<sup>34</sup> A great deal of progress has been made in exploring the complexities of late socialism, and nuancing the broad, reductionist labels that have come to represent entire decades, such as ‘Thaw’ and ‘Stagnation’. Alexei Yurchak’s seminal work, *Everything Was Forever, Until It Was No More: The Last Soviet Generation*, ignited more rigorous study of post-Stalinism by attempting to deconstruct false binaries about everyday realities of Soviet life and the conditions of late socialism which, he argues, made the collapse ‘possible without making it anticipated’.<sup>35</sup> Other critical re-evaluations of the Thaw have followed: Kozlov and Eleanor Gilburd have attempted to tell the story of the Thaw by avoiding a top-down leadership approach, focusing instead on ordinary people, and Stephen Bittner has provided a case study of the development of Moscow’s Arbat neighbourhood during the 1960s which exposes the internecine frictions of the period.<sup>36</sup> The Brezhnev era and Stagnation have also attracted a closer look from anthropologists and historians. In *Soviet Society in the Era of Late Socialism, 1964-1985*, Neringa Klumbytė and Gulnaz Sharafutdinova argue that late socialism has been almost entirely neglected, and they turn their attention to demonstrating that for individual citizens, this era was far from stagnant: it was full of vitality in ways that have been hitherto ignored.<sup>37</sup> Similarly, in *Reconsidering Stagnation in the Brezhnev Era: Ideology and Exchange*, the authors contribute to the growing re-evaluation of the Brezhnev years, and respond to *Soviet Society in the Era of Late Socialism*, by challenging the notion that the Brezhnev era was one of ‘resistance to change, corruption, moral decay, and

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<sup>34</sup> Denis Kozlov and Eleanor Gilburd, *The Thaw: Soviet Society and Culture during the 1950s and 1960s* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2013), 3.

<sup>35</sup> Alexei Yurchak, *Everything Was Forever, Until It Was No More: The Last Soviet Generation* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006), 5, 8, 4.

<sup>36</sup> Kozlov and Gilburd, *The Thaw*; Bittner, *The Many Lives*. See also Polly Jones’ examination of destalinisation: Polly Jones, *Myth, Memory, Trauma: Rethinking the Stalinist Past in the Soviet Union, 1953-70* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2014).

<sup>37</sup> Neringa Klumbytė and Gulnaz Sharafutdinova, *Soviet Society in the Era of Late Socialism, 1964-1985* (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2013), 8, 14.

other negative trends.’<sup>38</sup> In another recent volume, Gilburd interrogated the complex interaction of Soviet citizens with the West; she ultimately highlights the element of translation, ‘the channels of cultural transfer and the ways in which imports and their recipients change in the process’.<sup>39</sup> A number of other scholars have taken detailed looks at the private and domestic lives of citizens as well, building an imbricated understanding of these decades.<sup>40</sup>

Studies of culture and the arts after Stalin have focused predominantly on the margins and ‘exceptions’ of society rather than on the mainstream, as Juliane Fürst has noted (a trend which encompasses both Schmelz’s and Medic’s work on unofficial Soviet music as well).<sup>41</sup> In *Dropping Out of Socialism: The Creation of a Political and Historical Paradigm*, Fürst and Josie McLellan examined the late socialist experience of yogis, punks, hippies, dissidents, pacifists, and others.<sup>42</sup> Similarly, Rachel Platonov has explored the social phenomenon of creating marginal spaces, as well as community and individual identities through guitar poetry.<sup>43</sup> Others have focused on deviance in general, or the construction of the Baikal-Amur Magistral (the railway line) in Siberia, the influence of rock and roll in Dnipropetrovsk, or on dissident writers or filmmakers.<sup>44</sup> Even Donald Raleigh’s oral history of Russia’s Cold War

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<sup>38</sup> Dina Fainberg and Artemy M. Kalinovsky, *Reconsidering Stagnation in the Brezhnev Era: Ideology and Exchange* (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2016), vii, xv.

<sup>39</sup> Gilburd, *To See Paris and Die*.

<sup>40</sup> See Svetlana Boym, *Common Places: Mythologies of Everyday Life in Russia* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1994); Lewis H. Siegelbaum, *Borders of Socialism: Private Spheres of Soviet Russia* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006); David Crowley and Susan Emily Reid, *Socialist Spaces: Sites of Everyday Life in the Eastern Bloc* (Oxford: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2018). See also Juliane Fürst, ‘Where Did All the Normal People Go?: Another Look at the Soviet 1970s’, *Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History* 14, no. 3 (2013): 621–40.

<sup>41</sup> Fürst, ‘Where Did All the Normal People Go?’, 621.

<sup>42</sup> Juliane Fürst and Josie McLellan, *Dropping out of Socialism: The Creation of Alternative Spheres in the Soviet Bloc* (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2017).

<sup>43</sup> Rachel S. Platonov, *Singing the Self: Guitar Poetry, Community, and Identity in the Post-Stalin Period* (Evanston, IL.: Northwestern University Press, 2012).

<sup>44</sup> Brian LaPierre, *Hooligans in Khrushchev’s Russia: Defining, Policing, and Producing Deviance during the Thaw* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2012). Ward, *Brezhnev’s Folly*. S. I. Zhuk, *Rock and Roll in the Rocket City: The West, Identity, and Ideology in Soviet Dniepropetrovsk, 1960-1985* (Washington, D.C.: Woodrow Wilson Center Press, 2010). See also the collection of essays: Georgii Kiz’valter, ed., *Eti strannyye semidesiatye, ili Poteria nevinnosti: esse, interv’iu, vospominaniia* (Moscow: Novoe literaturnoe obozrenie, 2010).

generation does not focus on entirely ordinary or mainstream people, but those from well-connected families who attended special schools and were given exceptional treatment.<sup>45</sup>

There are some notable exceptions, however, to the trend of studying the margins rather than the mainstream, such as Anatole Pinsky's examination of subjectivity in Khrushchev era literature or Natalya Chernyshova's studies of Brezhnev era film.<sup>46</sup> The work which stands out as a model for my purposes, and prepares the way for my argument, however, is Polly Jones' *Revolution Rekindled: the Writers and Readers of Late Soviet Biography*, in which she insists that while unofficial and dissident culture have been well-studied, the mainstream of late Soviet culture has been almost entirely ignored.<sup>47</sup> Jones sets out to remedy this oversight by examining the '*Plamennye revoliutsionery*' ('Fiery Revolutionaries') series, a thoroughly state-sponsored, official collection of 156 biographies published between 1968 and 1990, to illuminate tensions that played out in 'production and reception of late Soviet literature and propaganda'.<sup>48</sup> Jones reveals the complexity of late Soviet literature in this series by emphasising the fluidity of unofficial and official cultures, and the paradox of having a high concentration of unorthodox writers within a highly orthodox publishing house. Jones' detailed study of editing practices, writers' dilemmas, and readers' reception reveals a stranger, more nuanced view of the mainstream of late Soviet life. It is this approach that I bring to late Soviet opera – a field with analogously complex balances of official and unofficial, and mixes of state and individual initiative.

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<sup>45</sup> Donald J. Raleigh, *Soviet Baby Boomers: An Oral History of Russia's Cold War Generation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011).

<sup>46</sup> Anatoly Pinsky, 'The Diaristic Form and Subjectivity under Khrushchev', *Slavic Review* 73, no. 4 (2014): 805–27; Natalya Chernyshova, 'Philistines on the Big Screen: Consumerism in Soviet Cinema of the Brezhnev Era', *Studies in Russian and Soviet Cinema* 5, no. 2 (2011): 227–54.

<sup>47</sup> Polly Jones, *Revolution Rekindled: The Writers and Readers of Late Soviet Biography* (Oxford: University Press, 2019), 9.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, 2.

## Shchedrin Revisited

Despite his undeniable prominence as a composer in the late Soviet period, Shchedrin has attracted almost no serious scholarly attention in the West. Shchedrin makes brief appearances in English and German-language volumes on Soviet music, where his music is typically ignored or hastily assigned to the group of musical compromisers of the ilk of Tikhon Khrennikov – the presiding, though also reductionist view of Khrennikov being that of a stereotypical party-line composer who wrote dull, sycophantic, Socialist Realist music.<sup>49</sup> This association between Shchedrin and this type of composer stems from their similar political and social statuses relative to other composers: Shchedrin, like Khrennikov and Dmitry Kabalevsky held prominent official positions within the Soviet establishment.<sup>50</sup> They were all ‘winners’ in the system. The tendency of scholars to valorise the ‘maladapted’ and the ‘losers’, however, has heightened suspicions of composers who achieved official success, and thus the comparison of Shchedrin to these composers has remained on the superficial level of biographical details, and has failed to prompt more in-depth musical analysis.<sup>51</sup> Shchedrin is relegated to this category despite the many musical and personal dissimilarities between him and these types of composers (and as I have already suggested, these ‘types of composers’ have not received their due, either). In his 1983 tome on Soviet music, for example, Schwarz labelled Shchedrin in passing ‘the darling of the [Soviet] musical establishment, the “official” modernist, a “reliable” composer of realistic tendencies despite occasional modernistic experiments’, but beyond those descriptions, he neglected to engage with or analyse any of his music.<sup>52</sup> In the next significant work on the topic, in 1998, Hakobian referred to Schwarz in

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<sup>49</sup> For Andrei Volkonsky’s opinion that Khrennikov’s reputation has been treated unfairly, see Elena Dubinets, *Kniaz’ Andrei Vokonskii: Partitura zhizni* (Moscow: RIPOL klassik, 2010), 56. For Taruskin’s opinion on the same, see Taruskin, ‘Two Serendipities’, 409. For an example of a German volume, see See Hannelore Gerlach, *Fünfzig Sowjetische Komponisten der Gegenwart: Fakten und Reflexionen: Eine Dokumentation* (Musikwissenschaftliche Studienbibliothek Peters: Leipzig, 1984): 383-407.

<sup>50</sup> And possibly they were associated because of Khrennikov’s and Kabalevsky’s early praise of Shchedrin. See RGALI, f. 3267, o. 3, ed.kh. 280

<sup>51</sup> Taruskin, ‘Two Serendipities’, 430.

<sup>52</sup> Boris Schwarz, *Music and Musical Life in Soviet Russia* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1983), 296.

noting that Shchedrin was an ‘officially approved modernist’, and to Frans Lemaire, who dismissed him as nothing but a ‘reliable’ composer;<sup>53</sup> disappointingly, even though Hakobian produced a heavily revised second edition of his volume in 2016, he did not revise any of his judgments – or any of the factual errors – regarding Shchedrin.<sup>54</sup> Instead, the paragraphs he spares Shchedrin catalogue some of his major works, but are often based on misleading details and inaccuracies. For example, in his second edition, he retained the claim that the orchestral suite from Shchedrin’s first opera, *Ne tol’ko liubov* (*Not Love Alone*), was one of his most successful ‘hits’, but ignores the history around the composition – the tumult that erupted when the opera it originated from was removed from the Bolshoi after only a handful of performances (an event I analyse on the basis of archival data in Chapter 1).<sup>55</sup> Overall, Hakobian concedes that Shchedrin is ‘an artist of a really great and multi-faceted skill, in whose portfolio there are several works of lasting value’, but he fails to delve into the complexities of the music, and whitewashes the composition history of the works he mentions.<sup>56</sup> Even in a recent study of the revival of Russian folk music – a movement in which Shchedrin was integral – his name is mentioned only twice in passing, while his contribution to folk revival through his integration of the genre into opera and ballet is entirely ignored.<sup>57</sup> More surprisingly, in her three-part series featuring ‘contemporary composers from the former USSR’, Tsenova features a total of twenty-seven composers, all peers of Shchedrin’s, but excludes him and his output.<sup>58</sup>

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<sup>53</sup> Hakobian, *Music of the Soviet Age*, 319. See also Frans C. Lemaire, *La Musique du XXe siècle en Russie et dans les anciennes Républiques soviétiques* (Paris: Fayard, 1994), 182, 381-2.

<sup>54</sup> Hakobian, *Music of the Soviet Era*, 326.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, 327.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, 326.

<sup>57</sup> Laura J. Olson, *Performing Russia: Folk Revival and Russian Identity* (New York: RoutledgeCurzon, 2004), 95-6.

<sup>58</sup> Galina Grigorieva, Carolyn C. Dunlop, and V. Tsenova, *Ex Oriente: Ten Composers from the Former USSR: Viktor Suslin, Dmitry Smirnov, Arvo Pärt, Yury Kasparov, Galina Ustvolskaya, Nikolai Sidelnikov, Elena Firsova, Vladimir Martynov, Andrei Eshpai, Boris Chaikovsky* (Berlin: Kuhn, 2002); Vladimir Barskii and V. Tsenova, *Ex Oriente II: Nine Composers from the Former USSR: Valentin Silvestrov, Roman Lednyov, Faraj Karayev, Victor Ekimovsky, Nikolai Karetnikov, Alemdar Karamanov, Vladimir Tarnopolsky, Sergei Slonimsky, Andrei Volkonsky* (Berlin: Kuhn, 2003); Vladimir Barskii and V. Tsenova, *Ex Oriente III: Eight Composers from the Former USSR: Philip Gershovich, Boris Tishchenko, Leonid Grabovsky, Alexander Knaifel, Vladislav Shoot, Alexander Vustin, Alexander Raskatov, Sergei Pavlenko* (Berlin: Kuhn, 2003).

These early, superficial accounts by scholars in the West established a flippant tone for engagement with Shchedrin that was then echoed in the press and popular writing. In a 1997 article in *Gramophone*, indicatively titled ‘Professional Compromise’, David Fanning described Shchedrin as the Soviet Union’s first ‘licensed modernist’, a label which elicited a cross reply from Shchedrin, who pointed out that if he were a ‘licensed modernist’, then he would not be the first, but in third place after Shostakovich and Prokofiev.<sup>59</sup> More recently, John Canarina, in his 2010 history of the New York Philharmonic Orchestra, claims Shchedrin was ‘never in the forefront of cutting-edge Russian composers, such as Schnittke and Gubaidulina, never mind Prokofiev and Shostakovich’, and that ‘his music lacks a signature style because the composer chose to write differently according to the needs of each composition.’<sup>60</sup> These remarks demonstrate both a lack of familiarity with Shchedrin’s music, and also a bias against him: the fact that his music is vast and varied, and conforms to the needs of each commission should hardly be reason to disqualify it from the ranks of serious compositions. Shostakovich, Schnittke, Gubaidulina and plenty of other Soviet composers (not to mention Imperial Russian composers) managed to adapt their styles to whatever was required for a given commission in order to sustain them, whether for theatre, cinema, or television. In addition, this kind of summary judgment suggests an ignorance of Shchedrin’s delicate situation at home – the balancing act that he was compelled to perform to maintain his popularity in the Soviet Union while trying not to compromise his own artistic principles. These judgments are made because the aforementioned texts came to these conclusions to

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<sup>59</sup> David Fanning, ‘Professional Compromise’, *Gramophone*, September 1997; Rodion Shchedrin, ‘Musical Compromise?’, *Gramophone*, November 1997. These letters also provoked a flurry of reader responses, some siding with Fanning, others with Shchedrin. See ‘Letter from Francis Pott’, *Gramophone*, December 1997; ‘Letter from Elger Niels’, *Gramophone*, February 1998. Elsewhere, Fanning has dubbed Shchedrin, ‘an unabashed progressive conservative’ - see Fanning, ‘Shchedrin’, *Gramophone*, April 1997.

<sup>60</sup> John Canarina, *The New York Philharmonic: From Bernstein to Maazel* (New York: Amadeus Press, 2010), 338.

dismiss Shchedrin abstractly; none referenced primary sources, and with the exception of Fanning, none employed musical analysis to bolster its claims.

Shchedrin has not been the only victim of this brand of polemical analysis. A good example of a hasty Western judgment of a Soviet ‘musical and political compromiser’ can be found in Richard Taruskin’s review of Kirill Molchanov’s *A zori zdes’ tikhie* (*The Dawns Are Quiet Here*) in 1976. His snide comments about this opera, which was on tour in New York from the Bolshoi Theatre, demonstrate his reluctance to engage seriously with a composition he deemed too tainted by Socialist Realism (even if the opera itself is, indeed, rather dreary):

this Soviet opera was, as might have been expected, a simple (not to say simple-minded) affair. But rarely can a new work have so utterly baffled a New York audience. A common reaction was incredulity that such a work could be taken seriously on its home ground, much less displayed before those not steeped in the arcana of socialist realism.<sup>61</sup>

Taruskin goes on to dismiss the work of the composer, commenting on the ‘degraded estate allotted music in the composer’s scheme.’<sup>62</sup> While it is true that there is little nuance to be found in Molchanov’s opera, it at least deserved a closer look. Unfortunately, these kinds of hasty value judgments about Soviet music have had a negative impact on the critical reception of Shchedrin’s music and the music of other late Soviet composers, who have been belittled without closer scrutiny because it was assumed they were Socialist Realist. Much more recently than Taruskin, for example, Frolova-Walker asserted that the key and most condemning pillars of the Socialist Realist aesthetic are the ‘glib, the bland, and the corny’.<sup>63</sup> It seems an insufficiently rigorous approach to dismiss works because of these attributes, however. If ‘the glib, the bland, and the corny’ are rarely problematic in Mozart, for example, why would they necessarily be problematic features when applied to Socialist Realism? Without addressing

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<sup>61</sup> Richard Taruskin, ‘Molchanov’s *The Dawns Are Quiet Here*’, *Musical Quarterly* 62, no. 1 (1976): 105–15. 108.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*, 110.

<sup>63</sup> Frolova-Walker, Marina. ‘The Glib, the Bland, and the Corny: An Aesthetic of Socialist Realism’, in *Music and Dictatorship in Europe and Latin America*, eds. Roberto Illiano and Massimiliano Sala. (Belgium: Brepols, 2009): 403-23.

such questions, her coinage further entrenched the idea that if a work can be described in these ways and classified under the banner of Socialist Realism, it is by definition unsophisticated.

The Russian-language literature is unhelpful in a different way. If in the West Shchedrin has been ushered aside without serious analysis, in Russia he has been glorified through selective lenses. Soviet era publications tend to highlight only compositions that incorporated folk elements, but to ignore his experimentation with controversial techniques such as serialism and aleatory devices. For example, a 1977 volume entitled *Muzykal'nyi teatr Rodiona Shchedrina* (*The Musical Theatre of Rodion Shchedrin*) draws attention to his most crowd-pleasing works, including *Konek-gorbunok* (*The Little Humpbacked Horse*, 1955), *Not Love Alone* (1961), and *Carmen-Suite* (1967).<sup>64</sup> Mikhail Tarakanov's life-and-works study of Shchedrin, published in 1980, also focuses on his most conservative compositions, and brushes over the operas by describing their plots without engaging with their music at all – no doubt because as a writer under commission from a state publishing agency, Tarakanov was under severe limitation as to what he could claim about an officially approved composer.<sup>65</sup> Selecting highly melodic (and somewhat uncharacteristic) fragments of Shchedrin's music, Tarakanov then argues that it was Shchedrin – rather than the 'avant-garde' composers – who was truly innovative and lasting because it was he who found new ways of harmonising chaos, and in this way developed a new Soviet style.<sup>66</sup> Tarakanov insists that in the second half of the twentieth century, since all musical styles became permissible, the avant-garde composers' striving towards new radical forms became irrelevant, and it was Shchedrin who revived melody and created a fresh and accessible form of music.<sup>67</sup> He summarises, 'the pathos of the music of Rodion Shchedrin as a Soviet artist lies not in focus on the conflicts of the times of

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<sup>64</sup> See I. Likhacheva, *Muzykal'nyi teatr Rodiona Shchedrina* (Moscow: Sovetskii kompozitor, 1977). It also includes a chapter on *Anna Karenina* (1971). Another book that covers similar territory is V. Kommissinskii, *O dramaturgicheskikh printsipakh tvorchestva R. Shchedrina* (Moscow: Sovetskii kompozitor, 1978).

<sup>65</sup> Mikhail Tarakanov, *Tvorchestvo Rodiona Shchedrina* (Moscow: Sovetskii kompozitor, 1980).

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid*, 6.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid*, 6-7.

tumultuous changes, or on the breaking of barriers, or on the motley flow of information, but in his effort to find in this apparent chaos a fixed foundation, to catch some kind of inner harmony.’<sup>68</sup> This kind of justification – and this kind of book – may have added little to a broader understanding of his music, but it did prove something else: at the time of publication, Shchedrin was experiencing the conspicuous favour of the establishment. No other composer of his generation had a book of this sort written about him in 1980; Schnittke’s first life-and-works treatment, for example, came only in 1990, Denisov’s only in 1993, and Gubaidulina’s only in 1996 (translated from an Italian volume).<sup>69</sup> Tarakanov’s book ignored Shchedrin’s most complex and problematic works, but at the same time, its existence affirmed his status, and confirmed the kind of musical reputation that the establishment was actively creating for him. Two similar treatments appeared in East Germany in 1982 and 1984, but Shchedrin fared little better in those: they both describe and catalogue his work without offering serious analysis or contextualisation.<sup>70</sup> A final Soviet book of this ilk on Shchedrin’s early works appeared in 1989, adding to his print reputation and demonstrating his continued position of favour.<sup>71</sup>

Post-Soviet publications bear striking similarity to Tarakanov’s: they describe and praise while offering little analysis. This is the case with Valentina Kholopova’s book, published in 2000, dedicated to Shchedrin’s output of the 1980s and 1990s.<sup>72</sup> Kholopova’s study is a useful chronicle of his major works by decade, but the narrative is often hagiographical, and little is done to contextualise Shchedrin’s music in the broader landscape

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<sup>68</sup> Ibid, 14.

<sup>69</sup> See Valentina Kholopova and Evgeniia Chigareva, *Al’fred Schnittke: Ocherk zhizni i tvorchestva* (Sovetskii kompozitor, 1990); Iurii Nikolaevich Kholopov and Valeriia Tsenova, *Edison Denisov* (Moscow: Kompozitor, 1993); Valentina Kholopova and Enzo Resta’no [Restagno], *Sofiia Gubaidulina* (Moscow: Kompozitor, 1996) (this is a retranslation from Enzo Restagno, *Gubajdulina* [Turin, E.D.T., 1991]).

<sup>70</sup> In the first instance, a book on Shchedrin was published which largely comprised a summary of his instrumental compositions. See Hannalore Gerlach, *Zum Schaffen von Rodion Schtschedrin* (Berlin: Kulturbund der DDR, 1982). In the second, the same author included a chapter about Shchedrin in an edited volume, which only includes translated ‘commentary’ from previously published Russian interviews and articles. See Gerlach, *Fünfzig Sowjetische Komponisten der Gegenwart*, 383-407.

<sup>71</sup> See I. Prokhorova, *Rodion Shchedrin: nachalo puti* (Moscow: Sovetskii kompozitor, 1989).

<sup>72</sup> Valentina Kholopova, *Put’ po tsentru: kompozitor Rodion Shchedrin* (Moscow: Kompozitor, 2000).

of late Soviet and post-Soviet composers. She introduces each of his first three operas, spending time on major themes, textual origins, and stylistic elements, but once again, these prove to be more descriptive than analytical, and without any reference to primary sources, add little to the basic facts already available about these works. Her evaluation of Shchedrin is best expressed in her entry in *Grove Music Online*: ‘While occupying a place within academic musical culture, Shchedrin considers it important not to break contact with a broad range of listeners and holds in high esteem the maxim that “great art must have a great audience”’, and that ‘Shchedrin expresses the traditions of Russian culture more directly than any other composer of the second half of the twentieth century’.<sup>73</sup> This is a bold sentiment that perhaps would carry greater credibility had her book included more robust analysis of his music, or of the trends in comparison to his contemporaries. Another post-Soviet book take a similar line, collecting praiseworthy articles and newspaper clippings about him into a sort of collage about his life.<sup>74</sup>

Similarly, recent textbooks for Russian secondary schools have affirmed Shchedrin’s place on the pedestal of the most important twentieth-century composers. A 2005 volume recognised him as the pioneer composer who elevated folk music by integrating it with his operas and ballets, calling his art ‘contemporary and innovative, rooted deeply in the national soil due to the influence of Russian classic art and folklore’ and ‘completely unique in the canon of world opera.’<sup>75</sup> A 2009 title went further. Bearing the title *Istoriia otechestvennoi muzyki xx veka: S.S. Prokofiev, D.D. Shostakovich, G.V. Sviridov, A.G. Schnittke, R.K. Shchedrin (History of Russian Music of the Twentieth Century: Prokofiev, Shostakovich, Sviridov, Schnittke, and Shchedrin)*, it justified this selection of composers by claiming that Shostakovich and Prokofiev ‘determined the style of Soviet music in the first half of the past

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<sup>73</sup> Valentina Kholopova, ‘Shchedrin, Rodion Konstantinovich.’ in *Grove Music Online*. <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com>. Accessed 9.03.2018.

<sup>74</sup> See E.S. Vlasova, ed., *Materialy k tvorcheskoi biografii* (Moscow: Kompozitor, 2002).

<sup>75</sup> T.N. Levaia, ed., *Istoriia otechestvennoi muzyki vtoroi poloviny xx veka* (St Petersburg: Kompozitor, 2005), 121-3.

century,' while the other three did so for the second half of the century.<sup>76</sup> The author announced that Shchedrin 'received from Shostakovich the baton of moral inquiry and strove to comprehend the destinies of the individual and humankind.'<sup>77</sup> Even without the vaunted language about the 'baton of moral inquiry', the proposed lineage of composers is still an odd one. If Schnittke is one of the sanctioned avant-garde, and Georgii Sviridov is the 'neoromantic' in the mix, then Shchedrin would once again fall between the two poles, becoming the goldilocks composer of modern Russia.<sup>78</sup> Perhaps for this reason, Shchedrin was the author's ultimate choice for the composer who would carry on the legacy of the first half of the century.

While at first the idea that Shchedrin is Shostakovich's legacy-bearer may be jarring, there are, in fact, striking similarities between their careers, and at least several ways in which Shchedrin could be deemed his successor. While the impoverished, denounced Shostakovich of 1948 bears little resemblance to Shchedrin, his status in his later years does invite comparison between the two. In 1960, Shostakovich accepted the post of First Secretary of the Composers' Union of RSFSR, and also, after years of resisting, finally capitulated to joining the Communist Party. As his official status and credibility rose, however, his credibility as a moral authority among the intelligentsia, dissidents, and the younger generation of composers fell.<sup>79</sup> His Twelfth Symphony (1961) was a particular disappointment to his admirers, many of whom felt he had lost his authentic voice.<sup>80</sup> Although he rehabilitated himself with the Thirteenth Symphony (subtitled 'Babi Yar', 1962) and other later works, Shostakovich's reputation would become tinged by officialdom. At Shostakovich's funeral, Shchedrin served in the 'guard of honour' and gave a speech as the replacement in his position of First Secretary

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<sup>76</sup> Galina Alfeevskaia, *Istoriia otechestvennoi muzyki xx veka: S.S. Prokofiev, D.D. Shostakovich, G.V. Sviridov, A.G. Schnittke, R.K. Shchedrin* (Moscow: Vladov Press, 2009), 2-3.

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>78</sup> Svetlana Savenko, 'Poslevoiennoi muzykal'nyi avangard', in *Russkaia muzyka i XX vek: russkoe muzykal'noe iskusstvo v istorii khudozhestvennoi kul'tury XX veka*, ed. Mark Aranovskii (Moscow: Gosudarstvennyi institut iskusstvovoznaniia, 1997): 407-31. 414.

<sup>79</sup> Pauline Fairclough, *Dmitry Shostakovich* (London: Reaktion, 2019), 117-9.

<sup>80</sup> *Ibid.*, 124.

of the Composers' Union.<sup>81</sup> Both men benefitted – and suffered – from the privilege of this position. Shchedrin's reputation would, however, become more than 'tinged' by officialdom; it would become inextricably intertwined, because unlike Shostakovich, he lacked an alternative persona of dissidence to offer a counternarrative.

But there is another way, beyond the connection with officialdom, in which Shchedrin has continued Shostakovich's legacy. At the dawn of his career in the 1920s, Shostakovich envisioned himself primarily as an opera composer: after completing his opera *Nos (The Nose)* at only age twenty-two, he planned to embark on a tetralogy of operas about women.<sup>82</sup> The first of these was to be *Lady Macbeth of the Mtsensk District*. After the dramatic denunciation of this work in *Pravda* in 1936, however, his plan to consolidate his international reputation as an opera composer was rudely interrupted. He would never complete another opera. Shchedrin began his career similarly – with an opera that would be surprisingly removed from the Bolshoi Theatre despite initial approval. But unlike Shostakovich, Shchedrin would return to the genre. Sixteen years after the scandal with his first opera, Shchedrin would return to the stage, this time with an opera deeply indebted in style, form, and source to Shostakovich himself. In Chapter 2, I examine this opera, *Mertvye dushi (Dead Souls)*, and the ways in which it reveals how Shchedrin became a figure who not only continued aspects of Shostakovich's career, but also elements of his style, too.

Some recent scholarship, on the other hand, has proven cautiously revisionist in regard to Shchedrin. In an article on the key composers of the post-war avant-garde, Svetlana Savenko surprisingly leaves space for Shchedrin. Why would Shchedrin make this list when he was excluded from those of so many other authors? First, Savenko breaks the monopoly of the avant-garde. While her primary focus is the so-called 'Troika' (Schnittke, Denisov,

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<sup>81</sup> Elizabeth Wilson, *Shostakovich: A Life Remembered* (London: Faber, 2006), 536.

<sup>82</sup> Rosamund Bartlett, 'Shostakovich as Opera Composer', in *The Cambridge Companion to Shostakovich*, ed. Pauline Fairclough and David Fanning (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008): 179-97. 179.

Gubaidulina), she also problematises the popular notion that a small group of composers, headed by this trio, was solely responsible for Soviet avant-garde music; rather, she demonstrates that far more composers were experimenting with these techniques than is typically suggested – including, for example, Shchedrin.<sup>83</sup> Second, she minimises the mystique of the avant-garde: she argues that it lasted for a very short time, at most a decade, and by the end of the 1960s, traditional elements began to permeate the work of even the most radical composers, causing the term to lose relevance.<sup>84</sup> Once again, this account coalesces with those of Tarakanov and of Schmelz, who has noted the shift away from avant-garde abstraction back to mimetic music in the mid-1960s, particularly in the music of Pärt, Schnittke, and Gubaidulina; while all of these composers went through phases of experimentation, therefore, it would be reductionist to label them based on a few years' worth of compositions.<sup>85</sup> Out of the strict serialism of the early avant-garde years a new form of melody was born, something much more conservative.<sup>86</sup> In other words, in less than a decade, the 'avant-garde' composers all returned to a form of melody that was more traditional than their earlier radical periods, and often deeply religious.<sup>87</sup> This chronology reveals as absurd the tendency of Western scholars to judge Shchedrin's entire career based on a category from which he was arbitrarily excluded, was only relevant for a decade, and yet, cast a long shadow on the rest of Soviet music.

What, then, is Savenko's summation of Shchedrin? Her taxonomy places Shchedrin outside the camp of the official composers and into the camp of experimenters (if not exactly into the camp of unofficial). She writes that his greatest contribution was successfully reconciling 'traditional folk beginnings with avant-garde approaches in his work, as a result achieving freshness and piquancy.'<sup>88</sup> In her estimation, compositions like Shchedrin's

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<sup>83</sup> Savenko, 'Poslevoiennyi', 414.

<sup>84</sup> Ibid, 420.

<sup>85</sup> *Such Freedom*, 220.

<sup>86</sup> Savenko, 'Poslevoennyi', 421.

<sup>87</sup> See L.N. Raaben, *O dukhovnom renessanse v russkoi muzyke 1960-80-kh godo* (St Petersburg: Blanka, 1998).

<sup>88</sup> Ibid, 429.

*Muzykal'noe prinoshenie* (*Musical Offering*, 1983) demonstrate that he was avoiding Socialist Realism by producing 'absolute music' in the Baroque meaning of the term; she argues that the sonic architecture of the work as a whole, and his use of experimental techniques within the overarching structure, demonstrate both boldness and sophistication in compositional style.<sup>89</sup> In the rest of this volume, a collection of essays on music in the twentieth century, Shchedrin is likewise presented as neither official nor unofficial. The essayists who mention Shchedrin in this volume all hint at musical similarities between his work and that of the recognised avant-garde; and for the most part, the authors avoid the simple political categorisations that have been previously used to dismiss his work.<sup>90</sup> Again, while a useful addition to the study of Shchedrin in general, neither Savenko nor any of the other authors analyses his operas.

A 2003 anthology of twentieth-century Russian opera finally addresses his operas with some form of analysis, recognising Shchedrin as a transformational figure in the development of the genre. *Not Love Alone* is highlighted as 'an important milestone in the development of contemporary Russian opera and in the development of the composer's own opera writing.'<sup>91</sup> Shchedrin earned praise for pioneering the fusion of folk intonations with serial and aleatory techniques which, the author insists, set an example for Soviet opera in the second half of the twentieth century.<sup>92</sup> It is not just the concept, however, but the execution which the author praises. Shchedrin became most known for transforming a Russian folk-singing style, *chastushka*, into 'high' music: 'In order for these techniques to be elevated to the level of opera they must be subjected to a coherent line of dramatic development and full of internal

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<sup>89</sup> Ibid, 430.

<sup>90</sup> Kholopova, for example, discusses the rhythmic innovation in the work of Shchedrin and several of his peers, such as Gubaidulina, who, she suggests, championed the most significant rhythmic developments. See Valentina Kholopova, 'Ritmicheskie novatsii', in *Russkaia muzyka i xx vek*: 553-88. 558, 586.

<sup>91</sup> Alekseeva and Kosacheva, *Antologiiia opernogo tvorchestva*, 29.

<sup>92</sup> Ibid, 28-30.

polyphony.<sup>93</sup> The author further explains that Shchedrin raised this style to the next level in his second opera, *Dead Souls*, where he introduced his own form of polystylism: the first violin section is replaced with a folk choir, but rather than creating a light-hearted pop or folk texture, Shchedrin maintained two styles in tension throughout the opera, the ‘high’ operatic style which is atonal and texturally dense, and the folk style, which is transparent in texture and modal in harmonic structure. The authors suggest that in this way, ‘the composer laid his foundation on the traditions of Russian and Western European schools’ but forged a style of his own, exclaiming that ‘*Dead Souls* is a brilliant answer to the question of the crisis in tone of contemporary opera’.<sup>94</sup> Though these analyses are a step forward, the few pages afforded these operas in the anthology only scratch the surface of the puzzles within and surrounding Shchedrin’s work.

The fact that so little has been written about Shchedrin – despite his prominence as a composer in the late Soviet era – is only one of the motivations to engage in a study of his operas. There are two other compelling reasons. First, Shchedrin’s work as a composer/librettist proves him to be not just a gifted musician and inventive storyteller, but also an astute social critic. Shchedrin’s operas provide ripe material for social and cultural history because of his uniquely prophetic voice as a composer – prophetic not in telling the future, but defined in the role of speaking truth to a society about its ills. From 1961 to 2015, each one of his operas revised a classic text, and each one included a slant towards exposing contemporary social or political woes. At the same time, it is important to remember that he did all of this not in the marginal spaces of late Soviet and post-Soviet culture, but in some of the best funded and most prestigious cultural institutions in Russia. In other words, this was criticism, but it was state-tolerated criticism. The pioneering of new melodic forms, therefore,

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<sup>93</sup> Ibid, 28.

<sup>94</sup> Ibid, 34.

was not Shchedrin's only contribution to Soviet music: he also sought to use his platform as a composer to expose the pathologies of his own nation – while still holding onto his reputation as (and benefits of being) a loyal state composer. It is these tensions that render Shchedrin's body of operas such an intriguing field of study.

Second, in addition to all of these reasons for studying Shchedrin as a lens for late Soviet opera, I have had the privilege of exclusive access to his personal archive located in the Russian National Archive of Literature and Arts in Moscow (*Rossiiskii gosudarstvennyi arkhiv literatury i iskusstva*). Officially, personal archives are supposed to be sealed while the composer is living, and then for a minimum of thirty years after the composer's death unless special permission is attained. I became personally acquainted with Shchedrin while working at the Mariinsky Theatre and after he recognised that I took a genuine interest in his music, he granted me, uncharacteristically, early access to his materials. I have had the opportunity to delve into a treasure trove of previously untapped resources. His archive includes hundreds of letters, diaries, notebooks of composition ideas, concert programmes he collected, score sketches, and photographs. This material provides a more colourful and accurate picture of Shchedrin and the cultural environment in which he and his contemporaries were writing, although given his longevity and the contested political and cultural contexts in which he has worked, necessarily require careful and critical assessment. Naturally, my friendship with Shchedrin has also meant that I have needed to be aware of biases I may have developed. From the outset, I decided to limit the material I would include in my research to four official interviews, rather than including any facts I might have come by through personal, casual interactions at work or in social situations. I found, however, that it was much easier to preserve critical distance than I had initially feared: the archives provided a window into a person very different from the one I got to know backstage, one separated by decades of life and the context of a political entity that no longer exists. The wealth of facts and figures and data from the

archives have allowed me to construct, I hope, an accurate and fair portrayal of the historical Shchedrin and his context.

### **The Category Problem**

One of the reasons that scholarship on Shchedrin has been so limited and contradictory is that his work defies easy categorisation: while he straddles many categories, he fits perfectly into none. Indeed, confusion in classification is noticeable in the rhetoric of three types of evaluators of his music: scholars, Shchedrin's peers and colleagues, and the composer himself. Western and Russian scholars alike have tried, and failed to categorise Shchedrin – both because of his artistic eclecticism and his political ambiguity. On the side of eclecticism, it is bizarre that while Schnittke's variety of eclecticism was dubbed 'polystylism' and valorised in the West, Shchedrin's brand – which also includes musicals, film scores, operas, and academic music alike – was deemed merely flippant and confusing; this is a tension that I address in the ensuing four chapters. On the side of political ambiguity, from a Western perspective, Shchedrin's reputation was tainted early, ironically, by his success: having earned public favour and material comfort for much of his career, he was not able to trade in the mystique of being a persecuted 'dissident' composer. As Schmelz has argued, 'dissident music' (interchangeably called 'avant-garde music') became immensely popular in the years just after the collapse of the Soviet Union, and it was made to seem more dangerous and costly to write than it actually was.<sup>95</sup> Tat'iana Cherednichenko has also argued that Gubaidulina, Volkonsky, Pärt, Schnittke, and Denisov all benefited from the brands of dissidence and protest, even when these ideas were not relevant for what they were doing, but were read back into their music retrospectively.<sup>96</sup> Shchedrin later voiced his resentment that the avant-garde had profited from

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<sup>95</sup> Schmelz, *Such Freedom*, 334.

<sup>96</sup> Tat'iana Cherednichenko, *Muzykal'nyi zapas: 70-e: problemy, portrety, sluchai* (Moscow: Novoe literaturnoe obozrenie, 2002), 40-1.

an exaggerated narrative, noting that they were not as oppressed as they seemed: for example, on the one hand, the music of Volkonsky – the founder of the Soviet avant-garde – was excluded from publication; on the other hand, it was not banned and was often played in smaller settings, and Volkonsky was still awarded an apartment by the Union of Composers.<sup>97</sup> Shchedrin also criticised his contemporaries for chasing after trends, whether serialism or the New Simplicity, rather than paying attention to what the listener might actually want to hear.<sup>98</sup> As late as 1997, he was still bemoaning the persistence of avant-garde music that he deemed unfriendly to the ear, saying, ‘Music is now striving to return to square one, to free itself from the constraints of the “minireligion” of the avant-garde...music is returning not only to its source, but to its biological source. To the gift of the human organism – hearing.’<sup>99</sup>

Contrary to the popular Western image of Shchedrin as an unmitigated crony, however, the composer was, at times, controversial. He endured his share of conflict with the authorities, and humiliation at their hands: his first opera, *Not Love Alone*, and his ballet *Carmen* both provoked the wrath of the Soviet musical establishment, and his refusal to sign the letter in support of the invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968 interrupted his career – and that of his wife, the ballerina Maya Plisetskaya – until he wrote a conciliatory oratorio, *Lenin v serdtse narodnom* (*Lenin in the People’s Heart*, 1969). Even the history of this oratorio, however, is not straightforward. As I will demonstrate in Chapter 2, he used his own opera to mock *Lenin in the People’s Heart* only a few years later. These internal complexities remain little known in the West. If in the West little attention is given to Shchedrin because of lack of knowledge of the scandals, however, the reverse is true in Russia: *because* of these scandals there are disagreements in Russian scholarship about whether he is a hallowed Soviet composer, a

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<sup>97</sup> Shchedrin, *Memories*, 106-7. The dislike was mutual: see Dubinets, *Kniaz'*, 56.

<sup>98</sup> Rodion Shchedrin: ‘Muzyka idet k sluzheteliu. Iz besed v iule 1982’, *Sovetskaia muzyka* 530, no. 1 (1983): 8-28. 20, 28.

<sup>99</sup> Rodion Shchedrin, ‘Rodion Shchedrin: Ia ne oshchushchailu v sebe peremen. Besedu provela Alla Grigor’eva’ *Muzykal’naia academia*, 663, no.2 (1998): 3-9. 6.

compromiser, or something entirely other (as I have demonstrated with the disagreements between Savenko, Tarakanov, and Kholopova).

Shchedrin's contemporaries also disagreed about how to classify him as a composer. Unofficial composer Gubaidulina categorised the various camps of composers at the Moscow Conservatory in the late 1950s this way: 'The first – the academic-conservative, the second – very radical, represented by Volkonsky, and the third – lying somewhere between the first and the second groups with Rodion Shchedrin as its main figure.'<sup>100</sup> This picture paints Shchedrin as more inventive than the conservatives, but still places him outside the ranks of the unofficial composers. This classification, however, seems to be based more on political affiliations than on the music itself. A different picture emerges when looking at the scores. Shchedrin's experimental compositions of the late 1960s were similar in technique to Volkonsky's (and in turn to Gubaidulina's, Schnittke's, and Denisov's). Oddly, his peers seemed to ignore these similarities. This may in part be due to the fact that even though Shchedrin was experimenting with the same techniques – serialism, dodecaphony, polytonality, atonality, aleatory devices – and doing so almost as prolifically as his contemporaries, he was not as outspoken *about* experimental techniques as they were, and did not actively promote his reputation along those lines. His other more mainstream works, therefore, became what he was best known for at the time, while the unofficial composers continued to curate their image outside the mainstream, and adopted the brand of avant-garde and dissident.

But his colleagues may have also been dismissive because some of them simply did not like him: they viewed him as a careerist, and a compromiser. Volkonsky, for example, claimed decades later that Shchedrin had been a snitch at the conservatory who had turned him in to the administration for having a Belá Bartók score in his possession.<sup>101</sup> At another time, he asserted

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<sup>100</sup> Schmelz, *Such Freedom*, 31.

<sup>101</sup> Mark Perkarskii, *Nazad k Volkonskomu vpered* (Moscow: Kompozitor, 2005), 83.

that Khrennikov had not been so bad, because at least he gave him an apartment, but he imagines that if Shchedrin had been in charge of the Union of Composers at the time, he would not have helped him.<sup>102</sup> Valentin Sil'vestrov, meanwhile, is reported as having dubbed him 'composer-in-law'.<sup>103</sup> Some of these snubs, and perhaps even Gubaidulina's reading of Shchedrin, seem to be influenced by rivalry, since Shchedrin began earning more commissions (and more money) long before she and the other four were stable in their careers. And in addition to more money and status, Shchedrin's personal affiliations set him apart from this group: he ran in different social circles from the Troika – he disliked Denisov on a personal level, and early in his career he entered into friendships with some controversial figures who would not have associated with the unofficial composers.<sup>104</sup> Some of these people were government officials or hangers-on, often connected to his wife's ballet career. For example, he was close to the socialite Lilia Brik, who had been the mistress of an infamous secret police chief.<sup>105</sup> At the same time, Brik's reputation was closely tied to the avant-garde of the 1920s; she was known as the muse and lover of the poet Vladimir Mayakovsky, and was known to have supported many artists in addition to Shchedrin and Plisetskaya, including Boris Pasternak, Sergei Eisenstein, and Vsevolod Meyerhold.<sup>106</sup> By the 1950s, however, Brik's salon had become full of government officials and Party-sanctioned artists – far from an avant-garde affair.<sup>107</sup> His association was just another indication to Shchedrin's colleagues that he moved in different – more lofty, and more official – circles than many of his former classmates at the conservatory. Shchedrin did not match the profile of the unofficial composers, though his

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<sup>102</sup> Dubinets, *Kniaz'*, 56.

<sup>103</sup> Ibid, 339.

<sup>104</sup> See more about the friendship circles and, for example, the unofficial composers at the Warsaw Autumn festival in Schmelz, *Such Freedom*, 49-50.

<sup>105</sup> Rodion Shchedrin, *Memories*, 91; Vasily Katanyan, *Lilia Brik – Zhizn'* (Moscow: Zakharov, 2002), 177.

<sup>106</sup> Katanyan, *Lilia*, 177.

<sup>107</sup> Ibid.

music is closer to theirs than they would admit; if they did admit it, they would likely accuse him of copying.

Finally, Shchedrin's own commentary on his music has played an important – and confusing – role in shaping his legacy. In 2002, two 'light' volumes were published about his life, with his name in the author's position – a picturebook biography of sorts that includes photographs accompanied by summaries of his major accomplishments, and a collection of his published articles and speeches over the years, gathered together with some scholarly commentary.<sup>108</sup> These volumes, however, only summarise his official life and official statements. It was in his 2007 autobiography, titled *Aftobiograficheskie zapisi* (*Autobiographical Memories*), that his more personal, inflammatory voice surfaced.<sup>109</sup> The work is an entertaining hodgepodge of stories, commentary on his music, defence against detractors, and random thoughts on other topics. For example, he spends a chapter explaining why he believes there was no such thing as dissident music in the Soviet Union, and another chapter entirely devoted to attacking Denisov. He takes pains to discredit the book *La Musique du XXe siècle en Russie: et dans les anciennes Républiques soviétiques* and its author, Lemaire, who, he claims, does not speak a word of Russian, slanders his work and was fed falsehoods by Denisov himself.<sup>110</sup> The autobiography is full of contradictions, however – both within itself, and when used as a reference against archival material. For example, he tells a very different tale about the premiere of his first opera from the one that emerges from the clues in the archives, obscuring the real reasons for scandal, as I discuss in Chapter 1. He also seems to be of two minds about life as a Soviet composer. Although he claims that 'there was never any

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<sup>108</sup> Rodion Shchedrin, *Rodion Konstantinovich Shchedrin - zhizn' i tvorchestvo* (Chelyabinsk: Music Production International, 2006); Rodion Shchedrin, *Monologi raznykh let*, ed. Iakov Platek (Moscow: Kompozitor, 2002).

<sup>109</sup> Shchedrin, *Memories*.

<sup>110</sup> Shchedrin, *Memories*, 192. See Lemaire, *La Musique du XXe siècle en Russie et dans les anciennes Républiques soviétiques*. His new edition, which Shchedrin does not reference, is similarly unfavourable towards Shchedrin, and riddled with similar errors, especially when it comes to Russian names and transliteration. See Frans C. Lemaire, *Le destin russe et la musique: un siècle d'histoire de la révolution à nos jours* (Paris: Fayard, 2005). Rosamund Bartlett has noted these errors in her review of the latter in *Music and Letters* 87, no. 4 (2006): 688–90.

such thing as a musical dissident in the Soviet Union’, he also recognises the impositions of the power structure on music when he makes comments such as, ‘I have always believed, and still believe, that *real* music has the strength to triumph over power and the ideological prohibitions power imposes’.<sup>111</sup>

Perhaps the most significant revelation from Shchedrin’s multifaceted memoir, however, comes from the tone: even in this supposedly confessional autobiography, Shchedrin still performs a balancing act, this time in order to maintain the image he needs to succeed in Putin’s Russia – a topic I explore at length in Chapter 4. It is a calculated set of statements. Shchedrin comes across as a man ready to settle scores: he is bitter towards his ersatz dissident rivals who outstripped him in international attention; he is frustrated about being mischaracterised by ignorant scholars and journalists; he is conflicted when it comes to music and politics; crucially, he is careful not to criticise the Soviet Union – and certainly not modern Russia – too severely. It seems that these particular memoirs are interpretations of his memories that serve as part of his career building plan; indeed, it was the year after this publication that his profitable relationship with the Mariinsky Theatre began, and this was accompanied by his most prolific period of opera composing, and of his operas being produced. Since publishing the memoir, however, he has become more taciturn and reluctant to discuss his music in public. A quip he made to a journalist in 2015 captured his change of heart: ‘if I had wanted to write a book, I wouldn’t have bothered with an opera.’<sup>112</sup> It is certainly an ironic comment since he had already written a book in addition to his operas. He claims now, however, that the music should speak for itself, and that he should not have to explain it or advocate for it.<sup>113</sup> His recent attitude does strike a contrast with the more public-facing behaviour of the unofficial circle, who all curated their personas, especially after they emigrated from the Soviet Union.

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<sup>111</sup> Shchedrin, *Memories*, 112, 119.

<sup>112</sup> Comment from Shchedrin to journalist in presence of author, 26 December 2015.

<sup>113</sup> Interview with author, 18 March, 2017.

Shchedrin, however, has shaped his legacy since the memoir more by actively pursuing performance opportunities for his music than by speaking about its characteristics.

## The Style Problem

Shchedrin is difficult to place into a stylistic category not only due to his own heterogeneity as a composer, but also because the categories themselves have suffered from poor – and politicised – definitions. One particularly problematic category is Socialist Realism. Dialogue about composers of the 1960s and 1970s has long centred around the idea of conformity to the Soviet aesthetic – as manifested in Socialist Realism – versus nonconformity.<sup>114</sup> But what was conformity supposed to sound like? While Frolova-Walker has argued that Socialist Realism can be defined as a bounded style, just like neoclassicism, for example, I argue that this was much less obvious for the composers at the time than for us in retrospect.<sup>115</sup> What is rarely mentioned is that the guidelines for composing Socialist Realist music were never clearly laid out by government authorities, nor were they defined by the Composers' Union.<sup>116</sup> From the earliest days of the Soviet Union until the late 1970s, arguments about what exactly Socialist Realism sounded like persisted. This problem was much more pronounced for music than it was for other art forms. Literature, for example, was subject to exacting guidelines that were easier to monitor: the three pillars of literary Socialist Realism were defined as *partiinnost'* (party-mindedness), *narodnost'* (nationalism, national character, or proximity to the people), and *ideinnost'* (ideological content).<sup>117</sup> While such precise definitions could not be translated directly to music, two pivotal events, one in 1935

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<sup>114</sup> Levon Hakobian, in describing the Bronze Age of Soviet composers, claims they are characterised by 'aesthetic non-conformism' and 'a marked indifference towards Soviet ideology'. See Levon Hakobian, *Music of the Soviet Era: 1917–1991* (London: Routledge, 2016), 255. See also Tsenova, *Underground Music*, vii.

<sup>115</sup> Frolova-Walker, 'The Glib', 422-3.

<sup>116</sup> Marina Frolova-Walker, 'From Modernism to Socialist Realism in Four Years: Myaskovsky and Asafyev', *Muzikologija* 3 (2003): 199-217. 200.

<sup>117</sup> Simon Morrison, *The People's Artist: Prokofiev's Soviet Years* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 87.

and one in 1948, contributed most significantly to the shaping of official policy for Socialist Realist music.

In the early Stalin years, the closest thing that composers had to *musical* doctrine were the statements issued at the ‘Discussion of Soviet Symphonism’ held at the Moscow Composers’ Union in 1935. Officially, the goal of this meeting was to define exactly what Socialist Realism meant in symphonic writing.<sup>118</sup> But far from issuing specific guidelines regarding approved or disapproved harmonies, musical forms, rhythms, or styles, the composers decided only on a smattering of adjectives that ought to characterise Soviet composition, adjectives such as ‘heroic’ and ‘monumental’ (though Shostakovich did fight for the addition of ‘lyrical’ to that list).<sup>119</sup> In addition, it was decided that compositions ought to have a ‘unified musical image’.<sup>120</sup> During this discussion, a few symphonies that we might today think of as paragons of Socialist Realism were raised as potential models: Nikolai Miaskovskii’s Symphony No. 12 (*kolkhoznaia* [‘The Collective Farm’], 1932), and Lev Knipper’s Symphony No. 4 (*Poema o bortse-komsomol'tse* [‘Poem About the Komsomol Fighter’], 1933-34). But these ideologically pure symphonies were repudiated not just by Shostakovich, but by party functionaries like Georgii Khubov: it became clear that the committee still valued quality of symphonic music as its highest priority, and that no amount of ideology could redeem a poorly crafted symphony.<sup>121</sup>

The aim of the ‘Discussion of Soviet Symphonism’, i.e., to translate the tenets of Socialist Realism into music, failed, and the ambiguity of the musical expectations of this principle meant that composers were always playing a guessing game. They had to imagine whether their pieces could be heard as ‘party-minded’ with little help defining what that meant.

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<sup>118</sup> Katerina Clark, ‘Shostakovich’s Turn to the String Quartet and the Debates about Socialist Realism in Music’, *Slavic Review* 72, no. 3 (2013): 537-89; 573, 577.

<sup>119</sup> *Ibid*, 578.

<sup>120</sup> *Ibid*, 579

<sup>121</sup> Pauline Fairclough, ‘Was Soviet Music Middlebrow? Shostakovich’s Fifth Symphony, Socialist Realism, and the Mass Listener in the 1930s!’, *Journal of Musicology* 35, no. 3 (2018): 336-67. 358.

Indeed, Pauline Fairclough has argued that it is time to entirely jettison the term ‘Socialist Realism’ when it comes to describing symphonies, both because of the absence of definable characteristics, and because preserving the term tempts scholars into categorising symphonies into the fictitious boxes of ‘conformist’ and ‘non-conformist’; while Soviet music critics were forced to play this labelling game, we certainly are not.<sup>122</sup> It is also clear that composers wanted to write compelling music, and believed such a feat might be possible within the parameters of these nebulously defined tenets. For example, Frolova-Walker has recently demonstrated that two of the earliest stalwart composers of Socialist Realism, Boris Asaf’ev and Miaskovskii, had actually been apologists of modernism just a few years before.<sup>123</sup> Their conversion to Socialist Realism was not forced; rather, they both discovered they could advance further as composers by embracing a new aesthetic, which happened to better suit their limited compositional gifts in any case.<sup>124</sup> If it was the case in the 1930s that some composers turned to Socialist Realism out of genuine compositional interest rather than compulsion, it became even more so after the death of Stalin, when consequences for dissent were minimised. It is a mistake, therefore, to dismiss all compositional efforts that happened (intentionally or unintentionally) to conform to these loosely defined standards.<sup>125</sup>

The ambiguity left by the proactive 1935 discussion (compounded, of course, by the *Lady Macbeth* scandal just one year later), however, came to a head in the reactive 1948 ‘Zhdanovshchina’ affair. The central facts of the scandal are well known: Stalin attended a performance of Vano Muradeli’s opera *Velikaia druzhba* (*The Great Friendship*) in January of 1948 and found it highly offensive<sup>126</sup>; his disapproval prompted a series of investigations and

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<sup>122</sup> Ibid, 366.

<sup>123</sup> Frolova-Walker, ‘From Modernism’, 199–217, 202.

<sup>124</sup> Ibid, 209.

<sup>125</sup> For a further discussion of the complicated development of Socialist Realism, see Patrick Zuk, ‘Nikolay Myaskovsky and the Events of 1948’, *Music and Letters* 93, no. 1 (2012): 61–85.

<sup>126</sup> E. S. Vlasova, *1948 god v sovetskoi muzyke: dokumentirovannoe issledovanie* (Moscow: Klassika-XXI, 2010), 236.

meetings which ended in a public denunciation of not just Muradeli, but of six other leading Soviet composers – Shostakovich, Prokofiev, Miaskovskii, Aram Khachaturian, Vissarion Shebalin, and Gavriil Popov – and a blacklist of a selection of their compositions.<sup>127</sup> As with the 1935 discussion, however, the actual content of their offenses was ambiguous. They were accused of ‘formalism’, which according to the Central Committee, meant an abandonment of melody, a ‘renunciation of the principles of classical music’, a fascination with ‘dissonance and disharmony’ which led to cacophonous, ‘muddled, nerve-racking’ sounds.<sup>128</sup> They praised instead the music of nineteenth-century Russian composers that was based on music ‘from folk song and dance’, and written for the people, not for aesthetes – in other words, the goal ought to be to create a ‘Soviet *kuchka*’, Zhdanov insisted.<sup>129</sup> Like the 1935 Discussion, however, this decree was almost as ambiguous as it was emphatic. For instance, Fairclough has noted that the blacklist of pieces was arbitrary and puzzling: there seemed to be little sense in banning Shostakovich’s Piano Sonata No. 2 rather than his much more radical Piano Sonata No. 1, or in forbidding Miaskovskii’s ‘*Kreml’ noch’iu*’ (*Kremlin by Night*), which was an attempt to please Stalin, rather than his modernist Thirteenth Symphony, or even Popov’s Symphony No. 1 or Prokofiev’s ‘*Rastsvetai, moguchii krai*’ (‘Flourish, Mighty Land’), unpopular works which were never performed anyway.<sup>130</sup> There was little logic to this list; it left composers with nothing but a muddle of mixed messages.

For Shchedrin, in 1948 a sixteen-year-old student at the Moscow Choral Academy, this event had a defining impact: while what exactly made music ‘formalist’ may not have been completely clear, the young Shchedrin turned his attention to a genre that was proven indubitably safe, even in the midst of these scandals: folk music. His first ballet and first opera

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<sup>127</sup> Kiril Tomoff, *Creative Union: The Professional Organization of Soviet Composers, 1939-1953* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2019), 123-7.

<sup>128</sup> *Ibid.*, 123.

<sup>129</sup> Pauline Fairclough, *Classics for the Masses: Shaping Soviet Musical Identity under Lenin and Stalin* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2016), 205, 210.

<sup>130</sup> *Ibid.*, 202.

would both be based on folk motifs, and he would ultimately play an important role in the folk revival movement in classical music. But it is also true that he was not entirely discouraged from experimenting – he finished some of his most radical works, like Piano Concerto No. 2 (1966) only a few years after these folk compositions.<sup>131</sup> If 1948 served to startle him, it did not permanently define his compositional choices. While he did compose some music aimed at being acceptable to the authorities, the majority of his compositions were on the edge of acceptability, and a minority deemed too radical. And yet, remarkably, through all of his stylistic vagaries, he managed to maintain a constant stream of domestic *and* foreign commissions for almost his entire career.

In Chapter 1, I examine in detail the development of Socialist Realism in opera. While ambiguity in the stipulations for symphonic writing left some freedom for composers to experiment with a variety of styles (especially after 1956, when they could experiment without the fear of serious punishment), opera was different.<sup>132</sup> As a multimedia art form, opera was subject not only to musical criticism, but also to narrative and visual criticism. Because of this, it was easier for laypeople – that is, non-musical bureaucrats and party functionaries – to intervene and feel they had the right to criticise, as Seinen has noted.<sup>133</sup> An analysis of Socialist Realism in opera, therefore, is by nature multidisciplinary. In focusing on a ‘microhistorical’ case study – to use Levitz’s term<sup>134</sup> – of Shchedrin’s first opera, *Not Love Alone* (1961), I examine the re-formation of the operatic standards for Socialist Realism after Khrushchev’s Secret Speech in 1956. I interrogate the diverse influences on establishing expectations for late Soviet opera by exposing the processes by which composers, theatre managers, and government officials came to agree (and to disagree) on the new artistic rules. I expose the

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<sup>131</sup> See more on the musical innovations in Shchedrin’s Piano Concerto No. 2 and Symphony No. 2 in Raaben, *O dukhovnom renessanse*, 187-91.

<sup>132</sup> O. V. Edel’man et al., *Sedition: Everyday Resistance in the Soviet Union under Khrushchev and Brezhnev* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2011), 3.

<sup>133</sup> Seinen, *Prokofiev’s Soviet Operas*, 2.

<sup>134</sup> Levitz, *Modernist Mysteries*, 21.

changes in how the political system interacted with the operatic process after the Stalin era, and in what ways political actors explicitly or implicitly put pressure on composers to write in specified styles or on specified themes, and then how these demands manifested on stage.

*Not Love Alone* is such an intriguing case study because on the surface it seemed fool-proof, and yet it was shut down by authorities – with no satisfactory explanation previously put forward. Using archival sources, I have pieced together clues for how this opera, with an all-star production team, a massive budget, a Socialist Realist novella as its text, and state approval made it all the way to the stage of the Bolshoi Theatre before being cancelled after only three performances. I have uncovered letters, diaries, Communist Party committee meeting transcripts, as well as contracts, ledger books, and financial records of the Bolshoi Theatre to determine why the production got so far, and how the decision was made to remove it. I have also transcribed and analysed over four hundred audience response surveys to the premiere. I use a few scenes from the opera itself to draw attention to what officials found objectionable about the substance of the opera. Ultimately, I advance an explanation different from any previously advanced by other scholars or Shchedrin himself: that it was removed because first, there was actually heightened artistic control in the early Khrushchev period – contrary to popular belief – and second, because officials worried that the opera was dangerous in casting light on the personal suffering resulting from the fulfilment of Soviet ideals, rather than on national glory. This case study demonstrates that in the 1960s, even in a representational art form, defining a work as Socialist Realist was not only politically charged, but also an interpersonally and artistically tangled process.

Chapter 2 focuses on the four major trends I identify in opera in the 1970s. Isolating one year as a pivotal moment in the decade, 1974, I delve into a case study from each trend. First, there was a solid handful of composers still writing ‘official’ opera, that is, works aspiring to be Socialist Realist propaganda; a close look at the production history and substance of

Molchanov's *The Dawns Are Quiet Here* reveals the situation of establishment composers. Second, there was the unofficial group of composers: I examine Schnittke's Symphony No. 1 as an example of this group and a contrast to Molchanov's work – and as a symphony which was curiously indebted to Shchedrin. Third, there was a revival of 1920s modernism, particularly the early operas of Shostakovich and Prokofiev, that became popular practically overnight (as the 1974 revival of Shostakovich's *The Nose* demonstrates). I explore varying definitions of modernism in the Russian context, both as a time period and as a movement, and how these understandings of modernism donned a new significance in the 1970s: I argue that modernism became an anachronistic elixir meant to revive a genre beleaguered by the vague – yet oppressive – constraints of Socialist Realism. Finally, I delve into what I call 'the fourth way', Shchedrin's opera *Dead Souls*, which is the only opera of the decade that completely departs from these categories by creating a new, non-propaganda, academic opera. In examining *Dead Souls*, I draw from the work of Esti Sheinberg to expose the musical techniques Shchedrin used to satirise the music of his Soviet colleagues, and even his own earlier oratorio, *Lenin in the People's Heart*. The message of *Dead Souls*, then, is an ironic one that mocks the stereotypes of Socialist Realist opera and yet strives to create something new within the Soviet context, a task which the opera itself seems to acknowledge as ridiculous in its ambition.

Chapter 3 explores Soviet opera at the point of transition: Perestroika and the eventual fall of the Soviet Union. Particularly, I emphasise opera as a force that influences, and is influenced by, social behaviours and movements. Shchedrin's third opera, *Lolita* (begun in 1989, completed in 1994), was his first opera for a foreign audience, commissioned for the Paris Opera by Mstislav Rostropovich, and his chance to define himself as an operatic composer outside the confines of the Soviet Union. By the time he had finished writing it, however, the unthinkable had happened: there was no more Soviet Union, and a work he began

as a Soviet composer in Moscow he finished as an émigré from his new flat in Munich. I focus on the concept of being ‘between’, drawing out four major themes relevant to this historical transition. First, in ‘Between Communist and Capitalist’, I discuss how Shchedrin navigated the shift between a Soviet system and a new, market-driven one. I explore the frontiers that became available to composers at home and abroad in the 1980s, and the situation in Russian theatres as Glasnost and Perestroika took full effect. Second, in ‘Between Soviet and Russian’, I analyse the evolution of moral norms in the late Soviet Union that allowed more risqué forms of literature to be published (including the Russian version of *Lolita* in 1989), and more explicit films to be produced, which made way for *Lolita* the opera. Next, I examine one of the most significant societal shifts, the reintroduction of religion. In ‘Between Secular and Sacred’, I analyse the effect of the reintroduction of religion on Shchedrin’s Perestroika era compositions, especially *Lolita*. Fourth, in analysing the music of the opera, I dwell on the paradox of being between East and West, and how, for the first time, Shchedrin’s deepest influence was not a Russian, but an Austrian: references to Alban Berg, and particularly to his *Lulu*, riddle the entire opera. Finally, I argue that the presence of all of these societal changes is contained in Shchedrin’s reinterpretation of Nabokov: Shchedrin’s *Lolita* was not an adaptation of Nabokov’s novel, but a creation of something entirely other, a parable about Russian society and its departure from God. I draw on Shchedrin’s copious sketches and diaries from the archives to expose his understanding of *Lolita* as a ‘biblical parable’. *Lolita* is Shchedrin’s bid to make order out of chaos through opera.

Chapter 4 offers an analysis of Russian opera in the twenty-first century. First, I demonstrate that the period of 2000-2012 represented a moment of relatively uninhibited freedom for opera houses, but that 2012-2020, corresponding with Putin’s third presidential term, has witnessed heightened government involvement in, and censorship of, opera. I also interrogate the hypothesis of a number of scholars that the Putin presidency represents a return

to many of the cultural values and practices of the Soviet Union – through the prism of Shchedrin, a figure strongly associated with earlier periods of Russian history and culture.<sup>135</sup> As a corollary, I discuss the rising importance given to the opera house as a symbol of power in contemporary Russia by tracing the astonishing building projects of theatres and concert halls across the country since 2000, with the Mariinsky-II as a primary example. Second, I chronicle the formation of a new, relatively consistent style in Russian opera that is perceived as national and divergent from trends in Western opera, a style I call ‘Russianist Realism’. I have derived this style from analysing every operatic premiere in Russia from 2000-2020, as well as policy documents guiding these premieres. I bring Shchedrin’s final opera, *Rozhdestvenskaia skazka* (*A Christmas Tale*, 2015) into conversation with these trends, and demonstrate how once again, the composer’s extraordinary adaptability allowed him to meet the demands of a new situation, and rise to a position of unparalleled prominence among living Russian composers. Finally, in a conclusion, I hypothesize about Shchedrin’s current place in contemporary culture, and how his legacy might unfold in the future.

### **Conclusion: Opera as a window to the Soviet Union**

Studying opera in the late Soviet and Russian contexts – and therefore studying Shchedrin – has the potential to yield insights reaching far beyond music because of the unique function it has served, and is continuing to serve, in that nation. Leaders from Stalin to Putin have recognised opera as something more important than an elite performance art. Both considered it a fundamental building block that supports a keystone of society: mythic narratives.<sup>136</sup> As such, it has been endowed with the significance of communicating a manufactured message deemed to have national significance. To understand opera’s function

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<sup>135</sup> For a summary of Putin’s third term trends, see Alexander Trustrum Thomas, ‘From Stalinist Socialist Realism to Putinist Capitalist Realism: Tracing cultural ideology in contemporary Russia’ in *New Drama in Russian: Performance, Politics and Protest in Russia, Ukraine and Belarus*, ed. J.A.E. Curtis (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2020): 53-68.

<sup>136</sup> I discuss Putin’s role in this at length in Chapter 4.

in delivering mythic narrative, one must first understand why crafting mythic narrative became, and remains, such an obsession for Russian leaders. The task can be traced to the Bolsheviks and the Revolution of 1917. In the wake of overthrowing the autocracy, one of the unforeseen successes of the Bolsheviks was how they imparted new ways of thinking and patterns of behaviour practically overnight – a feat which had to do largely with the power of the stories they were able to communicate. As Stephen Kotkin argued, it was their ‘long-term vision of Russia’s future in the form of a supremely confident narrative of the laws of history and all-purpose explanation of the present’ that helped foment the dreams of a new society.<sup>137</sup> An explanation of Bolshevik success, therefore, is deeply indebted not just to the leaders themselves, but to ‘a cluster of powerful symbols and attitudes’.<sup>138</sup> The mythic narrative was victorious over disillusionment for a surprisingly long period of time, approximately from the origin of this myth in 1917 until the late-1930s (with a gap of some despair in the early 1920s).<sup>139</sup> The prevailing attitude among Soviet citizens at this time was one of optimism and belief in this vision; as Walter Laqueur has noted, the only way that the Bolsheviks managed to consolidate power was to inspire hundreds of thousands – maybe millions – of genuine enthusiasts.<sup>140</sup> It was Stalin, however, who systematised this vision, which he called the ‘Foundations of Leninism’, and then codified it in art.<sup>141</sup> He recognised the power of images and stories to mobilise the Soviet people just as much as his forebears had, but took the next step to involve himself personally with the creation of not just opera, but cinema, plays, and ballet as well.

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<sup>137</sup> Stephen Kotkin, *Magnetic Mountain: Stalinism As a Civilization* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), 10.

<sup>138</sup> *Ibid.*, 14.

<sup>139</sup> Walter Laqueur, *The Dream That Failed: Reflections on the Soviet Union* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), 8.

<sup>140</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>141</sup> On film, see Sarah Davies, 'Stalin as patron of cinema: creating Soviet mass culture, 1932-1936' in *Stalin: A New History*, ed. Sarah Davies and James R. Harris (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005): 202-25. 223. See also the detailed discussion of the selection of the Stalin prize in Frolova-Walker, *Stalin's Music Prize*, 16-22.

The Soviets recognised that the continued propagation of myth through art was important because of what myth does: myth allows people to minimise temporary suffering in subservience to a goal greater than themselves.<sup>142</sup> As Mircea Eliade has explained:

Being *real* and *sacred*, the myth becomes exemplary, and consequently *repeatable*, for it serves as a model, and by the same token as a justification, for all human actions. In other words, a myth is a *true history* of what came to pass at the beginning of Time, and one which provides the pattern for human behaviour. In *imitating* the exemplary acts of a god or of a mythic hero, or simply by recounting their adventures, the man of an archaic society detaches himself from profane time and magically re-enters the Great Time, the sacred time.<sup>143</sup>

In other words, by living according to mythic principles, the imaginations of people can be captivated by a story worth being a part of, and by what their role in it could be. Myth always includes some element of the rational, but the power of myth goes far beyond the convictions gained from a set of logically defended rules, as demonstrated above.<sup>144</sup> This was the case in the reconstruction of Soviet society in the wake of revolution: the movement leaders succeeded in translating their philosophical principles into myth in visual, audible, and tangible ways.<sup>145</sup> This translation of an ideology into narrative yielded remarkable results. This was the generation that built the Moscow metro, went to teach in forsaken villages in the middle of the country, and acted out their belief in the vision in countless ways that established the USSR.<sup>146</sup> In this way, the USSR was the most successful modern state at shaping a worldview from scratch, and successfully convincing its citizens to ‘interact with reality according to its patterns and codes of behavior.’<sup>147</sup>

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<sup>142</sup> Paulina Sosnowska has argued that while myth has always been present in political narratives, it is only in the twentieth century that governments began to create new myths rather than re-writing older mythologies. I would agree with this, but also add that the Soviets produced the most expansive and comprehensive myth-weaving in this century. See Paulina Sosnowska, 'The Reinforcement of Political Myth? Hans Blumenberg, Hannah Arendt and the History of the Twentieth Century', *Eidos* 3, no. 2 (2019): 51-5.

<sup>143</sup> Mircea Eliade, *Myths, Dreams and Mysteries: The Encounter between Contemporary Faiths and Archaic Reality* (London: Collins, 1968), 23.

<sup>144</sup> Frederick Schneider, from an unpublished lecture entitled ‘Violence and Myth’, 3.

<sup>145</sup> See a full discussion in Orlando Figes, *Interpreting the Russian Revolution: The Language and Symbols of 1917* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999).

<sup>146</sup> Laqueur, *The Dream That Failed*, 9.

<sup>147</sup> Schneider, ‘Violence and Myth’, 2.

There are three critical elements to myth: the existence of an enemy conspiracy against the community, the presence of a saviour to mitigate this threat, and the ‘coming of a golden age’.<sup>148</sup> These were the key building blocks of narratives told about major historical moments or social – or even cultural – projects in the Soviet Union. One example of a well-structured Soviet myth is the rhetoric around the space programme. There was the threat to the community in the race with the Americans; there was the presence of the bold cosmonauts who appeared to save Soviet society from the American threat; and finally, there was the promise of technological utopianism and the creation of a ‘New Soviet Man’: in other words, the coming of a golden age.<sup>149</sup> The same could be applied to the Great Patriotic War, as World War II was known in the USSR: there was an external threat, a saviour – being the Soviet army – and the coming of an age rid of such enemies.<sup>150</sup> To a remarkable extent, these kinds of myths remained potent for decades, until in the late 1960s, when the fissures between the official myths and reality grew so wide that the metanarrative turned from myth to farce.

Graeme Gill has pinpointed four battlegrounds of myth-making in the Soviet Union: language (control of the terms used to describe reality), visual arts (for example, posters that clearly reflect regime priorities), physical environment (the manipulation of space and urban environments), and rituals (such as birth, death, and marriage ceremonies).<sup>151</sup> I propose a fifth, music – specifically, opera. The myth-making framework adumbrated above extends identically into the musical community: the rhetoric of musicians in the Union of Composers, and officials in the Ministry of Culture coheres exactly with the myth framework: there is the threat of ‘bourgeois ideology and morals’, which officials agreed they must fight against using

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<sup>148</sup> Gill, *Symbols and Legitimacy*, 4.

<sup>149</sup> See, for example, Slava Gerovitch, “‘Why Are We Telling Lies?’ The Creation of Soviet Space History Myths”, *Russian Review* 70, no. 3 (2011): 460–84. 461, 465.

<sup>150</sup> This myth, in fact, was so powerful that though it dwindled in the late 1960s, it resurfaced, and now has lived on well into the post-Soviet period. See Ekaterina V. Haskins, ‘The City of Victors: Epideictic Rhetoric at the Museum of Moscow and the Cult of the Great Patriotic War in Putin’s Russia’, *Memory Connection* 3, no. 1 (2019): 74–99.

<sup>151</sup> Gill, *Symbols and Legitimacy*, 11-6.

opera, and indeed, fight against it *in* opera as well; there were the proposed saviours – composers who would write appropriately Soviet-themed works; and there was the coming of a golden age, when a new style of Soviet opera would overtake the anachronistic, historical productions in the repertoire.<sup>152</sup> In addition, there are obvious reasons why opera is the ideal receptacle for delivering myth to Soviet citizens: it was state sponsored and supervised, so the government retained the right to influence the artistic process; it is representational rather than abstract, that is, it traditionally conveys a specific narrative story; it relies on text, so rather than the speechless frameworks of ballet or visual art, opera includes the dangerous element of words.

Additionally, each step of the operatic process can be seen as a microcosm of the state-building process: the operatic process is the national myth-making process in miniature. Consider the operatic process. It begins with an origin myth, a story that must be communicated. Next, the composer and the librettist consider how to best encapsulate this story in music; they consider the musical language, the text, the pace, and the ways the orchestral music interacts with the vocal music, and the way the vocal music supports or contradicts the message of the text at any given moment. Next, the composer and librettist find a stage director to vivify and concretise their abstractions: the director then finds the visual aesthetic to best communicate the agreed-upon message of the composition. After the casting, the rehearsal process begins, wherein the musicians and other artists walk through the steps of what this will be like to present to the audience. Finally, the opera is performed, but this is not the end: now, the managers of the theatre and representatives from the Ministry of Culture survey audiences and cultural elites to understand how much of the intended message actually reached the spectators. The success of the endeavour, according to the Soviets, would be measured by these metrics.<sup>153</sup>

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<sup>152</sup> See, for example, meeting transcripts such as ‘Dokumenty o tvorcheskoi deiatel’nosti teatrov opery i baleta Moskvy, 1977’, RGALI. f. 2329, op. 23, ed.kh. 661, especially 5-11.

<sup>153</sup> For more evidence of the importance of the institution of opera under the Stalin regime, see Philip Ross Bullock, ‘Staging Stalinism: The Search for Soviet Opera in the 1930s’, *Cambridge Opera Journal* 18, no. 1

All of these steps are aimed at communicating a vision to an audience. By substituting a few words, this whole process can be read as the way the Soviets were trying to orchestrate their communication of myth throughout society – except they were not building an opera, but an empire. For the Soviets both processes were ideologically driven; both were products of a larger narrative. The difference with opera is that the final product could then be watched from beginning to end, and tested for its effectiveness, in a way that testing the effectiveness of a myth within an entire population never could be. With opera, both the process and the outcome were supposed to perfectly align with the stories the Soviet government was telling about itself, and was hoping that the citizens would begin, in turn, telling about themselves. For this reason, in the Soviet context – and, I will argue, in the context of post-2012 Russia as well – opera reveals much about the hopes, fears, and dreams of those determining the affairs of the nation.

Opera has played a role not just in the artistic development of Russia from Stalin to Putin, therefore, but as a symbol of Russia's power and values. The stories it tells have been interpreted as reinforcers or detractors of its national agenda. Because in the Russian context opera stands for so much more than entertainment, the study of opera ought to be of interest beyond the sphere of musicology. I hope that this examination of late Soviet opera, and particularly Shchedrin's work, therefore, will spark new investigations from scholars of diverse fields interested in the late Soviet and post-Soviet periods. More importantly, I hope it will broaden and deepen the image of opera after 1953, which has long deserved to be freed from its two-dimensional frame.

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(2006): 83–108; Marina Frolova-walker, 'The Soviet Opera Project: Ivan Dzerzhinsky vs. Ivan Susanin', *Cambridge Opera Journal* 18, no. 2 (2006): 181–216.



## Chapter 1

### Opera After Fear: *Not Love Alone* and the transformation of Thaw era opera

The opera *Ne tol'ko liubov* (*Not Love Alone*) made it all the way through the rehearsal process at the Bolshoi Theatre in Moscow before it was suddenly cancelled after the premiere on 25 December 1961. The subsequent four performances were replaced by Giuseppe Verdi's *La Traviata*,<sup>1</sup> and after a handful of revived performances in 1962, *Not Love Alone* disappeared from the Soviet repertoire.<sup>2</sup> A few reasons render an abrupt cancellation of this work, after a fully-staged, public premiere, strange. First, operas did not slip through to the stage of the Bolshoi without oversight: it was protocol for the Ministry of Culture to supervise every step in the process, and to stage unofficial premieres to pass judgment on new productions before releasing them to the public, and the initial reviews of the score and libretto were glowing.<sup>3</sup> Second, *Not Love Alone* was awarded a substantial budget, one that was comparable to any other Soviet production in that year, and then granted a 25% budget increase in 1962 for revisions, demonstrating that at least at first, the Bolshoi management must have been expecting a long run.<sup>4</sup> Third, artistically and ideologically speaking, the opera had every reason to succeed. It was a star-studded collaboration by Communist Party supporters and leading figures of the avant-garde. It was conducted by Evgenii Svetlanov, a leading musician, directed

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<sup>1</sup> Rodion Shchedrin, interview with author, 17 March 2017.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid. It has, however, been revived at St Petersburg's Mariinsky Theatre, which I discuss in due course.

<sup>3</sup> A few well-documented cases include the scrutiny of Rodion Shchedrin's *Anna Karenina*: see Maya Plisetskaya, *I, Maya Plisetskaya* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2001), 301. Or the revival of Dmitri Shostakovich's *Ledi Makbet Mtsenskogo uezda*, retitled *Katerina Izmailova*; see Elizabeth Wilson, *Shostakovich: A Life Remembered* (London: Faber, 2006), 329. For a published review of *Not Love Alone* in 1961, L. Genina, 'Novo, talantlivo', *Sovetskaia muzyka* 272, no. 7 (1961): 23-9.

<sup>4</sup> RGALI, f. 648, o. 11, ed.kh. 355: 41, 74, 76, 79.

by Georgii Ansimov, a staunch Party member, designed by Aleksandr Tyshler, a prominent artist associated with the early Soviet avant-garde, sung by the mezzo-soprano Irina Arkhipova, the prima donna of the Bolshoi, and even choreographed and danced by Maya Plisetskaya, a figurehead of Russian ballet even then (and, of course, Shchedrin's wife).<sup>5</sup> In addition to this wealth of artistic talent, this cast of characters ticks all the boxes that ought to have been necessary to survive the politics of the Soviet 1960s: enough unofficial artists were involved to nod at destalinisation – that is, to suggest a greater inclusivity and openness to new artistic ideas – but the opera was still supervised by Party functionaries, which would quell any latent governmental fears about artistic insubordination.<sup>6</sup> It was also the correct topic for the time – not only an opera on a Soviet theme, but one about a collective farm, which addressed one of Khrushchev's obsessions: agriculture (his plans for large-scale corn production gave rise to his nickname, *kukuruznik*).<sup>7</sup> Finally, the music was written by Shchedrin, who had proven his talent in composing for drama by collaborating with various playwrights much to the praise of the Moscow arts critics;<sup>8</sup> in addition, he was even one of the first composers chosen to represent Soviet musicians on trips abroad.<sup>9</sup>

The failure of this opera, however, has never been fully explained. The narratives accounting for this opera's sudden cancellation are sparse, and the ones that do exist are inconsistent. Shchedrin mentions the abrupt end to the opera's run in his 2007 autobiography, but other than a few sentences there, and a few mentions in other musicians' memoirs, there has been little published speculation, let alone critical commentary. He has given several

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<sup>5</sup> Irina Arkhipova, *Muzyka zhizni* (Moscow: Vagrius, 1997), 32.

<sup>6</sup> For further discussion of destalinisation and the Thaw, see Polly Jones, *Myth, Memory, Trauma: Rethinking the Stalinist Past in the Soviet Union, 1953-70* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2014), esp. 17-56 and 97-128. See also Donald A. Filtzer, *The Khrushchev Era: De-Stalinisation and the Limits of Reform in the USSR, 1953-1964* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1993). For a critique of the term, see Stephen V. Bittner, *The Many Lives of Khrushchev's Thaw: Experience and Memory in Moscow's Arbat* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2008), esp. 9-12. Older but relevant scholarship includes Priscilla Johnson McMillan, *Khrushchev and the Arts; the Politics of Soviet Culture, 1962-1964* (Cambridge, MA.: MIT Press, 1965), 5.

<sup>7</sup> Wolfgang Leonhard, *The Kremlin since Stalin* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1962), 352-3.

<sup>8</sup> RGALI, f. 3267, o. 3, ed.kh. 156.

<sup>9</sup> 'Information Bulletin of the Union of Soviet Composers', *Foreign Commission* 1, no. 2 (1962): 5.

interviews about this opera, but his accounts contradict one another. At times he claimed it failed because there was too much scandal,<sup>10</sup> at others because there was too little.<sup>11</sup> Other scholars have suggested it failed in the box-office, or failed because of ‘excessive length’, even though it is less than two hours long.<sup>12</sup> Levon Hakobian even hinted it was well-received at the time, and in that sense a success (though this is verifiably false).<sup>13</sup> This scanty engagement with the opera has meant that *Not Love Alone* has not informed opera scholarship generally, or even Shchedrin scholarship, in a significant way – even though it is an essential case study for Thaw era opera.

While Philip Ross Bullock and Marina Frolova-Walker have analysed the conventions of the Soviet opera project in the 1930s, and Leah Goldman has extended this research to the late Stalin period with her study of the only successful Soviet grand opera, Iurii Shaporin’s *Dekabristy (The Decembrists)*, there are no studies on how policy regarding opera changed in the early Thaw, and how composers responded musically – and practically – to their new circumstances.<sup>14</sup> *Not Love Alone* was the second opera of the Khrushchev era to be commissioned for the stage of the Bolshoi, but it was the first opera of the era that caused a scandal. As a result, casting a light on its path to official acceptance, and then official rejection, is a crucial key to exposing the landscape of the Thaw in all of its self-contradictory policies, and the development and curation of opera in this context.

Newly discovered archival evidence suggests that *Not Love Alone* is neither a story of a box-office flop, nor of a typical scandal, as originally suggested. Rather, its story

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<sup>10</sup> Leila Abassova, ‘Not Love Alone’, Mariinsky.ru, <https://www.mariinsky.ru/playbill/playbill/2016/5/19/3>, Accessed 21.06.2017,

<sup>11</sup> Rodion Shchedrin, interview with author, 17 March 2017

<sup>12</sup> Levon Hakobian, *Music of the Soviet Era* (New York: Routledge, 2016), 326.

<sup>13</sup> Boris Schwarz, *Music and Musical Life in Soviet Russia, 1917-1981* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1983), 274–5.

<sup>14</sup> See Philip Ross Bullock, ‘Staging Stalinism: The Search for Soviet Opera in the 1930s’, *Cambridge Opera Journal* 18, no. 1 (2006): 83–108; Marina Frolova-walker, ‘The Soviet Opera Project: Ivan Dzerzhinsky vs. Ivan Susanin’, *Cambridge Opera Journal* 18, no. 2 (2006): 181–216; Leah Goldman, ‘Negotiating “Historical Truth”: Art, Authority, and Iurii Shaporin’s *The Decembrists*’, *Journal of Musicology* 33, no. 3 (2016): 277–331.

demonstrates the hangover of the culture of fear left behind by the Stalin era, and the messy, illogical, inexpert, and contradictory operation of artistic policy during the Thaw. Four sets of sources serve as the basis of this study: government documents, the opera itself, the composer's personal files, and Bolshoi Theatre memoranda. First, examining the flurry of edicts, incentive structures, and artistic mandates made by the Ministry of Culture in the years immediately following Joseph Stalin's death exposes the fact that the government was as invested as ever in controlling the message of opera – even if there was supposedly more freedom granted in other arenas of culture. Second, the score and libretto of the opera suggest the composer's sincere attempt to compose an opera that would be a compelling piece of art in a new Soviet style that broke away from the character tropes, and musical tropes, of other Stalin era operas; and yet, he considered it as built on enough Soviet material to be considered as falling within official criteria. Finally, an analysis of why it failed from the internal perspective of the Bolshoi Theatre reveals a bitter truth of the 1960s: Party ideology, often as translated to the arts by laymen bureaucrats, still ruled the fate of opera, and even an artfully crafted, audience-pleasing composition could not prevail if it cast a shadow on any aspect of Soviet life.

### **Khrushchev and Culture**

*Not Love Alone* appeared during the frenzied years following Stalin's death and Nikita Khrushchev's denunciation of the former leader in the so-called 'Secret Speech' (1956), events which began the period that became known as 'The Thaw' (*ottopel'*). Scholars disagree about how long the Thaw lasted: while some scholars have deemed Khrushchev's deposition in 1964 to be a hard end to the Thaw, Nancy Condee has argued that there was no universal end, but rather, the Thaw lasted for different lengths of time for different cultural industries.<sup>15</sup> Peter

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<sup>15</sup>Nancy Condee, 'Cultural Codes of the Thaw', in *Nikita Khrushchev*, ed. William Taubman, Sergei Khrushchev, and Abbott Gleason (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000): 160-76. 162.

Schmelz has argued that for music, the Thaw lasted longer than it did for literature and visual arts: it did not end until 1974, with its conclusion marked by the premiere of Alfred Schnittke's First Symphony, an event I discuss in Chapter 2.<sup>16</sup> Taking my cue from Schmelz, therefore, I define the Thaw – as it relates to music – as the period between 1956 and 1974.

While the Thaw has generally been described by scholars as a period of increasing liberalisation, it was actually a time of mixed messages:<sup>17</sup> it was experienced by contemporaries not as a continuous, ineluctable process, but as a series of thaws and freezes that affected every industry differently, and often sporadically.<sup>18</sup> As every sector of society scrambled to determine the norms of Khrushchev's rapidly evolving regime, artists experimented and tested to find the limits of the new leadership's tolerance.<sup>19</sup> The expectations regarding opera, however, were not withheld for long, and when they were announced, the policy was almost entirely continuous with that before Khrushchev. Beginning in the 1930s, Stalin had become increasingly concerned about the content of the operas shown in the Soviet Union, and he recognised the genre as a powerful weapon that the Soviet Union could wield as propaganda.<sup>20</sup> His interference with Shostakovich's *Ledi Makbet Mtsenskogo uezda* (*Lady Macbeth of the Mtsensk District*) in 1936 is well known, and from that time on, his quest for

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<sup>16</sup> Peter Schmelz, *Such Freedom, If Only Musical: Unofficial Soviet Music during the Thaw* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 25.

<sup>17</sup> See, for instance: M. R. Zezina, *Sovetskaia khudozhestvennaia intelligentsiia i vlast' v 1950-e - 60-e gody* (Moscow: Dialog MGU, 1999), 5. Ronald Grigor Suny, *The Soviet Experiment: Russia, the USSR, and the Successor States* (New York ; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 405–6. William J. Tompson, *Khrushchev: A Political Life* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1997), 132–3. Gregory Freeze, 'From Stalinism to Stagnation, 1953-1985', in *Russia: A History*, ed. Gregory Freeze (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002): 347-82. 349. Roy Medvedev, *Khrushchev* (Garden City, N.Y.: Anchor Press/Doubleday, 1983), 220–1. Dina Spechler, *Permitted Dissent in the USSR: Novy Mir and the Soviet Regime* (New York, N.Y.: Praeger, 1982), xv-xxii.

<sup>18</sup> Bittner, *The Many Lives*, 4. In addition, the Khrushchev years became retrospectively thought of as a period of reform because of its interpretation during the Gorbachev years, when the leader attempted to build his reforms on precedent by rehabilitating Khrushchev as the initiator of an unfinished version of Perestroika. See David Nordlander, 'Khrushchev's Image in the Light of Glasnost and Perestroika', *Russian Review* 52, no. 2 (1993): 248–64.

<sup>19</sup> Aleksandr V. Pyzhikov, 'Soviet Postwar Society and the Antecedents of the Khrushchev Reforms', *Russian Studies in History* 50 no. 3 (2011): 28-43. 28.

<sup>20</sup> Irina Kotkina, 'Soviet Empire and Operatic Realm: Stalinist Search for the Model Soviet Opera', *Revue Des Études Slaves*, no. 3–4 (2013): 505-18. 509.

ideologically appropriate operas only intensified. By the 1950s, creating worthy Soviet operas was the dominant artistic preoccupation of the party. As one contemporaneous scholar explained, ‘Opera...is one of the most meaningful forms of musical creation...it is no accident that the majority of artistic papers published by the Party focus on the problems of creating an artistic and worthy Soviet opera’.<sup>21</sup>

Nothing perceptibly changed about the Party’s operatic priorities after the Secret Speech. In 1958, the Ministry of Culture once again declared the development and production of ‘operas on contemporary themes’ a top priority.<sup>22</sup> Furthermore, between 1959 and 1961, hundreds of pages of proposals, mandates, and reprimands were written by the Department of Musical Institutions within the Ministry addressing the need to produce more Soviet operas.<sup>23</sup> The Minister of Culture herself, Ekaterina Furtseva, commented in a 1960 letter to her colleagues that it was of utmost importance ‘to increase the propaganda of Soviet images through opera’.<sup>24</sup> She wrote this letter even after the encouraging statistics of 1959, the year in which productions of Soviet operas had overtaken the classics: 54% of operas performed in theatres around the country were by Soviet composers – 101 out of 187 total produced.<sup>25</sup> And yet, she was not satisfied. This statistic was insufficient to be considered a victory for two reasons. First, though the numbers were outwardly impressive, there were not enough *new* or *quality* Soviet operas being written – few lasted more than a season, and many more never even made it to the stage; the best of the bad options were simply recycled. Between 1959 and 1961, Furtseva ordered updates every few months about how to fix this issue. An initial suggestion included raising the pay for composers from a range of 30,000-80,000 roubles for a commission, to a range of 50,000-100,000 roubles, with the possibility of a bonus should the opera fit the

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<sup>21</sup> Natalia Kulikovich, ‘Sovetskaia opera na sluzhbu partii i pravitel’stvo’, *Institut po izucheniu istorii i kultury SSSR* (1965), 3.

<sup>22</sup> Joseph A. Borome, ‘The Bolshoi Theater and Opera’, *The Russian Review* 24, no. 1 (1965): 52-64. 60.

<sup>23</sup> RGALI, f. 2329, o. 3, ed.kh. 876, 870, 872.

<sup>24</sup> RGALI, f. 2329, o. 3, ed.kh 870: 1.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*

proper ideological categories.<sup>26</sup> A similar proposal was added for the librettists.<sup>27</sup> Money as a panacea must have failed, however, because a few months later, Furtseva heightened the priority level again, declaring, ‘the creation of new outstanding operas on contemporary themes is the primary task out of the entire sphere of musical arts’.<sup>28</sup> An updated plan outlined more expansive action, including education projects, recruitment tours, and penalties for composers for late completion of Soviet-themed work.<sup>29</sup>

But the second problem was more serious: audiences were not interested in Soviet operas. Even though more Soviet operas than non-Soviet operas were produced, audiences still preferred to attend the classics.<sup>30</sup> Surveys given to audience members of *Not Love Alone* prove this point. Over half of the responses of the audience were negative, but more than 90% of those negative responses had nothing to do with the quality of the opera; rather, audience members simply wanted to see classics and were not interested in modern productions. If they made it all the way to the Bolshoi Theatre, they asserted, they hoped to see a spectacle from another time and place, with Vikings or pyramids, not a sight they could witness every day in their hometowns or factories.<sup>31</sup> Ultimately, it was this lack of audience enthusiasm for Soviet themes – not a lack of operas on stage – that prompted Furtseva to conclude, ‘Soviet opera has so far not occupied the most important place in the repertoire of our theatres’.<sup>32</sup>

By April 1961, the orders to fix the Soviet opera problem became exasperated. Officials chided composers and librettists for not taking the issue of Soviet-themed operas seriously.<sup>33</sup> Analyses grappling with the failure of Soviet opera began to appear in droves. Commissioned to demystify the conundrum, Boris Iarustovskii offered several explanations: first, the pay was

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<sup>26</sup> RGALI, f. 2329, o. 3, ed.kh. 870: 1.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid.

<sup>28</sup> RGALI, f. 2329, o. 3, ed.kh. 876: 1.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid, 5-6.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid, 2.

<sup>31</sup> RGALI, f. 648, o. 11, e.kh. 401a, 401.

<sup>32</sup> RGALI, f. 2329, o. 3, ed.kh. 876: 1.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid, 21-2.

still too low, and second, he acknowledged it was challenging to write an opera on Soviet themes when the genre itself was born of principles of Western formalism and modernism.<sup>34</sup> The claim that opera was inherently Western was an unpopular position. Subsequent reports to Furtseva on the status of opera combated Iarustovskii's argument, stating it could not be too difficult to write Soviet operas because there had already been a few such masterpieces, including Sergei Prokofiev's *Voina i mir* (*War and Peace*, 1946), Dmitry Kabalevsky's *Sem'ia Tarasa* (*The Taras Family*, 1947), and Shaporin's *The Decembrists* (1953).<sup>35</sup> Now, however, established masters such as Shostakovich and Aram Khachaturian were avoiding the genre altogether, and so were the talented young composers. The obvious answer to the question of why composers avoided opera was not voiced in these files: the task of writing an opera that was artistically palatable to the creator and politically palatable for the Ministry was nearly impossible. Shchedrin's failed attempt to walk this line with *Not Love Alone* demonstrates this fact.

### **The Origins of *Not Love Alone***

Amidst this reinvigorated drive for modern opera, the Bolshoi Theatre offered a contract to Shchedrin for a new opera, *Not Love Alone*, likely signed between September and November 1960.<sup>36</sup> The composer adumbrated his embarkation on the project in his memoirs. During an editing session of music Shchedrin had composed for the film *Liudi na mostu* (*Men on the Bridge*), screenwriter Sergei Antonov presented Shchedrin with his new collection of short stories. Shchedrin was particularly impressed with 'Tetia Lusha' ('Auntie Lusha').<sup>37</sup> The plot is simple but unusual for Soviet literature, let alone opera: just after World War II, the

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<sup>34</sup> Ibid, 30, 34.

<sup>35</sup> RGALI, f. 2329, o. 3, ed.kh. 876.

<sup>36</sup> RGALI, f. 648, o. 11, ed.kh. 355.

<sup>37</sup> Rodion Shchedrin, *Autobiographical Memories* (Mainz: Schott, 2012), 99.

young Volodia Gavrilov returns with his family to a *kolkhoz* (a collective farm) that is presided over by a woman, Auntie Lusha. Lusha, who is no longer young, is attracted to this boy, and dreams of seducing him to end her loneliness. Ultimately, she is rejected by Volodia. The boy marries his younger fiancée, Natasha, and Lusha is left to run the farm.<sup>38</sup> While this topic was officially acceptable because it was about the modern day and common Soviet folk, it was also risky because it dealt with the unpleasant realities of Soviet life. According to Shchedrin, the tale struck him for its relevance and realism:

My attention was drawn to ‘Auntie Lusha’, about the sad fate of a lonely woman, no longer young, carrying on her shoulders the heavy burden of managing a collective farm in the post-war years of general collapse. Having seen with my own eyes the plight of Russian villages left without men after the years of war, I thought it an important theme.<sup>39</sup>

But Shchedrin focused on the human – rather than the political – drama. Commenting on the core of the plot, he explained:

It lay less in Auntie Lusha’s position as Chairman of the *kolkhoz*, than in the sudden onrush of her passion for the worthless young greenhorn Volodia Gavrilov who arrives on the scene with no idea what is expected of him. The short story, with its quagmire of Freudian overtones due to the conspicuous discrepancy in the ages of its protagonists, possessed a wealth of delicate nuances that attracted me.<sup>40</sup>

Shchedrin’s account of the opera’s origin, however, is one of many instances when the veracity of his memoirs comes into question. There is an alternative – and somewhat contradictory – account of the opera’s birth. While Shchedrin suggested the idea was his, Lilia Brik, the librettist’s wife, asserted it was hers. This alternative narrative is significant because of who Brik was, and her role as an intermediary between artists and politicians. She was, and is, a controversial figure: on the one hand the ‘leader of the Russian avant-garde’, ‘muse of Mayakovsky’, and advocate of artists, and on the other hand, the mistress of a secret police chief.<sup>41</sup> Despite – or perhaps because of – her complex personal connections, she would

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<sup>38</sup> Sergei Antonov, ‘Tetia Lusha’, in *Povesty i rasskazy* (Moscow: Moskovskii rabochii, 1961): 3-16.

<sup>39</sup> Shchedrin, *Memories*, 99.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>41</sup> Plisetskaya, *I, Maya*, 187.

become a pivotal figure during Thaw era artistic politics. In addition, she became an important figure because of the structure of artistic approval that had arisen in the late 1940s: in the post-war period, Stalin vested more power in creative unions, making leadership positions more desirable, but also meaning that career bureaucrats began to take over positions from artists.<sup>42</sup> Since the multitude of government agencies set up to monitor the arts became filled with people who had little experience with creative work, these officials began to rely on an entire network of brokers and patrons who could advise on the issues at stake – with Brik as one of the central figures in this network.<sup>43</sup> She was friends with many artists, and the host of regular salons to introduce them to each other and to vet their ideas, but she also boasted close connections to members of the government and NKVD (the Soviet secret police, predecessor to the KGB), who would also frequent Brik’s gatherings.<sup>44</sup> In other words, she could be a powerful advocate – or a dangerous foe – for artists who wished their works to be approved by the Ministry.<sup>45</sup>

Brik also became a mentor to Shchedrin and his wife, ballerina Maya Plisetskaya, and for years the young couple relied on her advice.<sup>46</sup> Brik’s biographer detailed her role in *Not Love Alone*, stating that at the beginning of the 1960s, she ‘advised Rodion Shchedrin, at that time still a burgeoning composer, to write an opera where the action takes place on a collective farm, stating, “After all, you have to do something new!”’<sup>47</sup> Whether the story was Shchedrin’s idea and Brik blessed it, or it was Brik’s and Shchedrin adopted it, the point remains the same: with the sanction of a figure of such standing and with such friends, Shchedrin would not have thought this choice likely to provoke scandal. On the contrary, with her husband Vasili Katanian writing the libretto, her mentee Shchedrin composing the music, and her friend

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<sup>42</sup> Vera Tolz, 'Cultural Bosses as Patrons and Clients: The Functioning of the Soviet Creative Unions in the Postwar Period', *Contemporary European History* 11, no. 1 (2002): 87-105. 104.

<sup>43</sup> Kiril Tomoff, 'Most Respected Comrade . . . : Patrons, Clients, Brokers and Unofficial Networks in the Stalinist Music World', *Contemporary European History* 11, no. 1 (2002): 33-65. 34.

<sup>44</sup> Plisetskaya, *I, Maya*, 186.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>46</sup> Vasili Katanian, *Lilia Brik - Zhizn'* (Moscow: Zakharov, 2002), 177.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, 179.

Tyshler designing the sets, Brik was deeply involved in this project. Her extensive personal investment suggests that as the artistic team surged ahead in their plans, she was fully aware of how they were proceeding, and in turn, her own connection with the Minister of Culture renders it likely that the officials were also well-informed of the development of this project.

Likely bolstered by Brik's support, Shchedrin and Katanian collaborated on a libretto that did not shy away from the scandalous elements of Antonov's story, but embraced and enhanced them. In the short story, the Freudian attraction – between a teenage boy and a much older woman – is one-sided, and the affair does not materialise. The original version features a woman exhausted by responsibility whose passion is awakened by an attractive newcomer. She is distracted by her daydreams, jealous of the younger women, and for a moment, imagines Volodia is interested in her. But this is not the case, and her hopes remain in the realm of fantasy.<sup>48</sup> Tetia Lusha convinces Volodia to meet her to 'examine farm equipment', and though she is convinced it is a romantic rendezvous, there is no indication that Volodia thinks the same. She pursues the affair, but discovers that he is not interested when he arrives and is clearly only there to see the farm equipment. The short story shows unnatural inclinations on the part of only one of them. In the opera libretto, however, the authors ensure the attraction is mutual, and the affair unfolds on stage thanks to added scenes. For example, Volodia's father unexpectedly tries to force his son to leave the village after the community dance, where he first began to fear that Volodia had developed an improper affection for Lusha (renamed Varvara in the opera) after spending most of the evening dancing with her. Volodia affirms his desire to stay in the *kolkhoz*, however, whereas in the story he had hoped to leave.<sup>49</sup> In addition, when Volodia and Varvara agree to meet the next evening – and choose the farmyard, a place

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<sup>48</sup> Antonov, 'Tetia Lusha', 14–5.

<sup>49</sup> Rodion Shchedrin, *Ne tol'ko liubov: liricheskaia opera v trekh deistviakh s epilogom* (Moscow: Izdatel'stvo Muzyka, 1965), 166–7.

whither lovers were known to abscond – they both understand this will be a rendezvous.<sup>50</sup> In the opera, however, before Volodia arrives at the rendezvous, Varvara has a battle with her own feelings: torn between duty to the farm and her desire for the boy, she sings an aria trying to determine whether she truly came for business or pleasure.<sup>51</sup> She begins her heart-rending aria by agonising, ‘how can I go on living without joy?’ but finally decides, ‘no, they placed me here to care for others, to answer for the people’.<sup>52</sup> She must forsake her own happiness in order to fulfil her duty. While in the short story there is no sacrifice, only misunderstanding, in the opera, there is only misery and the self-sacrifice of love for the greater good. The final message of *Not Love Alone* was that Varvara’s loyalty and sense of duty cost her the only joy she had left to hope for – not the triumphant portrayal of Soviet life that the Ministry of Culture had envisioned.

While the message of *Not Love Alone* would be deemed problematic eventually, somehow the opera initially slipped through the first stage of the rigorous screening process, the piano-vocal audition. The screening process was another legacy of the 1930s, when Stalin began consolidating control of the arts and gradually developed a protocol for the approval of theatrical and operatic productions.<sup>53</sup> This process lasted as a necessary test for any production until the late 1970s when a general slackening of control seeped into society.<sup>54</sup> Until then, for an opera to be staged at the Bolshoi Theatre, the composer would submit to an audition before a committee of Party officials and artists to play through the score on the piano while singing the vocal parts. After this exercise, the committee would discuss the merits or problems of the

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<sup>50</sup> Nina Sladkova, *Rodion Shchedrin: Notograficheskii spravochnik* (Moscow: Sovetskii kompozitor, 1986), 18; Shchedrin, *Ne tol’ko liubov*, 174.

<sup>51</sup> Shchedrin, *Ne tol’ko liubov*, 184–6.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid*, 194, 202.

<sup>53</sup> Pauline Fairclough, *Classics for the Masses: Shaping Soviet Musical Identity under Lenin and Stalin* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2016), 104.

<sup>54</sup> Schmelz, *Such Freedom*, 327. I should mention, however, that some remnants of this process have recently been revived in the twenty-first century, with members of the government attending evaluative dress rehearsals, a phenomenon I discuss in Chapter 4.

work and present a verdict.<sup>55</sup> The committee was allegedly very taken with Shchedrin's first run-through of *Not Love Alone*, a fact the composer attests to, and something also verified by archival evidence.<sup>56</sup> The fact that the audition of *Not Love Alone* was not only uneventful but favourable was an exception rather than the rule. The auditioning process for new productions was often much more combative and more absurd.<sup>57</sup> For example, Shchedrin mentions that in an audition a few years earlier, when he was presenting his ballet *Konek-gorbunok* (*The Little Humpbacked Horse*) for the committee, he was attacked by them for 'un-graphical representation' of the horse's flight through the air (how he was supposed to graphically represent this, no one ever bothered explaining to him).<sup>58</sup> In his account, he was defended by Shostakovich, who was at the time acting as a musical consultant for the committee.<sup>59</sup> As a composer, Shostakovich himself had experienced a vicious audition in a similar setting in 1955 when he had first tried to revive *Lady Macbeth of Mtsensk*, only to be blocked by the committee, which is perhaps why he showed more empathy for Shchedrin.<sup>60</sup> Unlike Shostakovich's audition which forewarned of storms to come, Shchedrin's experience was all positive, and left him no reason to worry about the fate of his first opera.

In Shchedrin's case, he claimed in his memoirs that, 'none of the commentators grasped what the work was really about, but they were very taken with its purely external attributes: the portrayal of contemporary Soviet life, the Chairman of the collective farm...the piece itself being rooted in the Russian folk tradition'.<sup>61</sup> The shock for the committee would not come until the dress rehearsal. Shchedrin's 2007 analysis of the event – that no one understood its core – is verified by a transcript of an official discussion about the opera held after the dress rehearsal.

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<sup>55</sup> See, for example, Wilson, *Shostakovich*, 329–39.

<sup>56</sup> See Shchedrin, *Memories*, 100-1 and RGALI, f. 648, op. 11, ed.kh. 11: 24.

<sup>57</sup> Wilson, *Shostakovich*, 331.

<sup>58</sup> Shchedrin, *Memories*, 100.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>60</sup> Wilson, *Shostakovich*, 332.

<sup>61</sup> Shchedrin, *Memories*, 100-1.

A representative from the Ministry of Culture, Zaven Vartanian, expressed his surprise at the differences between what he remembered from the piano-vocal audition, and what he saw on stage. ‘When the composer played on the piano, it was brilliant’, he remarked, ‘but in its staged version it seemed unfinished, to avoid putting it more harshly’.<sup>62</sup> It was most probably the charming music that had initially disguised the scandalous elements, which once on stage, were more obvious and more offensive.

### **Music for the Still Frigid Thaw**

Shchedrin’s music generally pleased by being both accessible and familiar, and yet still academic: it remained unquestionably in the genre of opera, unlike other Soviet ‘operas’ which veered into musical or even theatre.<sup>63</sup> He composed the score of three interweaving elements. The first is stylised folk melody, reminiscent of nineteenth-century pastoral intonations like those found in Piotr Tchaikovsky’s *Evgenii Onegin* (*Eugene Onegin*). This sets the scene for the *kolkhoz*, an idyllic situation populated by happy farmers who sing the day away. This element, however, forms a base layer that becomes ironic. The second element is the more strictly operatic: it is introduced to the audience through Varvara’s entrance and first aria, a dark and brooding soliloquy that has nothing in common with the lilting, memorable tunes of the first scenes. The third layer is diegetic music – that is, music of which the characters and the audience are equally aware.<sup>64</sup> Much of the second act comprises this type of music, and the self-awareness of the performance allows the audience reactions to be guided by the reactions of the characters. Finally, Shchedrin imbues the opera with a sense of irony in combining these elements to bring out the incongruity of the cheerful folk songs juxtaposed with the heartfelt suffering exposed by the more operatic numbers.

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<sup>62</sup> RGALI, f. 648, o. 11, ed.kh. 11: 24.

<sup>63</sup> See my discussion of Kiril Molchanov’s *A zori zdes’ tikhie* in Chapter 2, for example.

<sup>64</sup> See Chapter 2 for a more detail on the function of diegetic music in Soviet opera.

Stylised folk melodies begin the first act, second act, and conclude the opera. In these sections, the orchestra accompanies with delicacy and clarity first the all-female chorus (at the beginning of the first two acts) and then the male chorus of farm workers. They sing throughout in the form of a *chastushka* – a brief, lyrical, rhyming song that bears historical and aesthetic resemblance to the limerick. Originating in the late nineteenth century, both the *chastushka* and the limerick are folk forms, but are also expressions of the industrial age.<sup>65</sup> Both are anonymous in attribution and passed by word of mouth.<sup>66</sup> More important than the similarity of origin, however, the comparison gives the native English speaker a sense of the *feeling* of the *chastushka*: like the limerick, it effortlessly exposes the idiomatic rhythms of its own language, entices the listener with catchiness and simplicity, and often includes double entendre. But there are some significant differences. First, while the limerick has been historically a male line, the *chastushka* has been a female one, perfect for this opera where the action revolves around a woman put in a position of power and who is necessarily compared to the simple village women who sing these lines.<sup>67</sup> Second, the *chastushka* typically consists of a quatrain with the second and fourth lines rhyming, but can be as short as a couplet or as long as six lines.<sup>68</sup> In addition, whereas the limerick is always satirical and often bawdy, the *chastushka* extends to a range of subjects, from the political, to the historical, from the plight of homeless workers to the dread of conscription, from the pleasantness of meeting a lover in a grove, to the irony of bringing the same lover on a date to listen to Lenin give a speech.<sup>69</sup>

The experiment of elevating *chastushki* to the genre of opera was something new which no one in Shchedrin's generation had tried.<sup>70</sup> And the *chastushka* is not an accessory, but an

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<sup>65</sup> 'Chastushka', in *Muzykal'naia entsiklopedia* (Moscow: Sovetskii kompozitor, 1973-1982). See also Robert Stephenson, 'The Chastushka and the Limerick', *Southwest Review* 47, no. 2 (1962): 166-71. 169.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*, 168.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>69</sup> 'The Chastushka' in *The Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics*, online edition (Princeton: Princeton University Press), accessed 08.04.2020. See also Stephenson, 'The Chastushka', 171.

<sup>70</sup> Natalia Listova, *V. I. Shabalin* (Moscow: Sovetskii kompozitor, 1982), 197–201.

integral part of the opera: it not only frames the background for the fundamental action, but the text is also the foundation against which the actions of the main characters take on new significance. The *chastushki* create the mood, tell of the inner subtext of events, clarify meaning, evaluate, ‘and sometimes even overrule the action’, as Mikhail Tarakanov has argued.<sup>71</sup> The opera begins with a *chastushka* and a melodic theme that will return in each act as a background to the more serious personal drama. This theme begins and ends the first act, and ends the entire opera, and in each instance, there is a different *chastushka* put to the theme. (Figure 1)

The women’s voices are paired with flutes, violins, and every time they appear, with lightly orchestrated accompaniment. In this instance, they sing:

*Okh y da, milyi v goru, ia pod goru,  
Proidet ne oborotitsia...  
Okh y da, ia-to dumala vorotitsia  
a on domoi toropitsia*<sup>72</sup>

This can be rendered as:

*Ah yes, my darling approaches the hill, the hill I am near  
But he walks by and doesn’t turn around  
Ah yes, I thought I would be by him found  
But it turns out he’s hurrying home-bound.*<sup>73</sup>

It is a light-hearted, country ditty, and yet, the seemingly innocuous lines become relevant to the action that is actually occurring between Varvara and Volodia: thus, the seemingly innocent, folk-imitation theme of the pastoral *chastushka* is brought into dialogue with the unfolding action. In this instance, the lyrics of this rhyme could easily be applied to the jilted Natasha, the fiancée of Volodia who is at this point in the opera being ignored by the young man as he turns his attention to Varvara.

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<sup>71</sup> Mikhail Tarakanov, *Tvorchestvo Rodiona Shchedrina* (Moscow: Sovetskii kompozitor, 1980), 16.

<sup>72</sup> Shchedrin, *Ne tol’ko liubov*, 76–7.

<sup>73</sup> This translation is mine, and not intended to be literal, but rather to catch something of the rhyme scheme, as well as the sentiment of the verses.

113

АЛТЫ ДЕНУШКИ (за сценой)

Хор

Охы да, милый в го - ру, а под

pizz.

росо Cl.

*P cantabile*

77

го ру, пройдет не о - бо - ро - тит - ся,

Timp.

114

росо

эх... Я-то ду... охы да, а-то ду - ма-ла во - ротит-ся (а),

*p*

Figure 1 *Not Love Alone*, No. 9 'Finale of Act I', p. 76-77.

Act II begins similarly to Act I, with a female chorus, but this time a much livelier one, and in the form of a call and response, with one female leader singing verses and the chorus responding, a typical *chastushka* format.<sup>74</sup> This number is followed by a pastoral song by a chorus of male tractor drivers and other male workers on the farm – so idyllic that it is a pastiche of itself; like in the pastoral in Tchaikovsky's *Pikovaia dama* (*Queen of Spades*), the scene is one of that portrays an archetype rather than regular people, which in turn casts the more three-dimensional, flawed characters into greater relief against this backdrop. Both of Shchedrin's numbers idealise happy peasants, the first hinting at the joy of singing cheerful songs instead of working, and the second, displaying a lazy complacency and contentment of the men with their lot. Even though Shchedrin's characters are collective farmers and tractor drivers and not nineteenth-century peasants, by singing folk-style songs based on *chastushki* rather than Soviet songs, they become reminiscent of Tchaikovsky's portrayal of peasants in his operas, rather than of Soviet intonations in the operas of Shchedrin's contemporaries. For another example, at the beginning of Tchaikovsky's *Eugene Onegin*, the nobleman's daughter Olga calls upon the peasants working in their fields to sing a song to entertain them, and the peasants oblige with a lively folk song and dance (a theme Tchaikovsky would reuse in the final movement of his Fourth Symphony). Later in the same opera, a chorus of maidens sings as they work in the fields, first on stage as Tatiana ponders her fate, and then off-stage. In both cases, the peasants are shown as contented and pure, separate from the conflict that disturbs the higher levels of society. Shchedrin presents in *Not Love Alone* a sovietised version of Tchaikovsky.

While the choruses in *Not Love Alone* share some resemblance with the folk chorus tradition in Russian opera in general, the comparison with *Eugene Onegin* is justified both by its aptness, and because the composer drew the parallel himself, calling his own opera 'a

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<sup>74</sup> Shchedrin, *Ne tol'ko liubov*, 80–4.

collective-farm version of *Eugene Onegin* ('*kolkhoznyi Evgenii Onegin*').<sup>75</sup> In both *Eugene Onegin* and in *Not Love Alone*, the chorus serves two primary functions: to consciously entertain, and provide a contrast between a simple, complacent emotional state, and the individual turmoil of lead characters. These roles remain intimate and personal, rather than taking on the national or historical significance that choruses do in other Soviet operas or even grand nineteenth-century operas. In most other classic Russian operas the choruses take on a variety of more formal roles, such as welcoming a returning hero (Modest Musorgsky's *Boris Godunov*, Aleksandr Dargomyzhsky's *Rusalka*), reprimanding poor behaviour (Act II of Dargomyzhsky's *Rusalka*), celebrating critical events, such as weddings or military victories (Mikhail Glinka's *Ruslan i Liudmila* [*Ruslan and Liudmila*], Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov's *Skazka o nevidimom grade Kitizh i o devitse Fevronii* [*The Tale of the Invisible City of Kitezha and the Maiden Fevronia*), or simply singing 'slava' – 'glory' – to the tsar, a tradition which began in Russian opera thanks to Catherine the Great.<sup>76</sup> The composers of Soviet operas, as we will see with *The Decembrists* and *Polovod'e* (*High Water*), more often chose one of these other functions for the chorus – particularly singing glory – but Shchedrin adhered to the pastoral entertainment of the folk. There is no triumphalism, no proclaiming the goodness and glory of the Soviet state.

Nearly the entire second act, including this folk chorus which begins it, is diegetic. Shchedrin takes advantage of the self-awareness of the characters to make his own self-aware joke. After two folk songs by the chorus, a third begins where the amateur band of the collective farm comes to entertain everyone. This scene produces a good deal of humour, as Shchedrin writes in such a way as to ensure that the band will sound clumsy and out-of-tune, and the

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<sup>75</sup> *Music Seasons*, 'Sankt Peterburg opera' ..., 04.11.2016. <https://musicseasons.org/tag/r-shchedrin/>. Accessed 09.04.2020.

<sup>76</sup> Inna Naroditskaya, *Bewitching Russian Opera: The Tsarina from State to Stage* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 125.

characters on stage laugh along with the audience.<sup>77</sup> After this, Volodia decides to entertain everyone with a ditty so poor that it embarrasses his fiancée, who implores him to stop, and also prompts the on-stage conductor to denounce it as, ‘muddle instead of music!’ (*sumbur vmesto muzyki*).<sup>78</sup> This infamous phrase is the exact title of the article published in *Pravda* on 28 January 1936, at Stalin’s personal instigation, that denounced Shostakovich’s *Lady Macbeth of Mtsensk*.<sup>79</sup> Including it here, in such a ridiculous setting, suggests that first, Shchedrin was willing to risk a joke about past censorship practices, and second, that he surely did not believe such practices would return. He certainly could not have expected serious risk of personal harm for poking fun at the absurdity of censorship, and in this he was correct, but he may have been surprised by the censorship his opera was yet to endure.

Had it not been for the surprising plot developments in the opera, Shchedrin’s choice of creating an opera based on *chastushki* would have been exactly the type of melodious and accessible material that Khrushchev believed should define Soviet opera, and it could have been a composition that could easily have won Shchedrin accolades.<sup>80</sup> After all, historical song forms were becoming popular at the time, and not just in opera: Shostakovich’s Symphony No. 11 (1957), dedicated to the fortieth anniversary of the October Revolution, included revolutionary songs of 1905, and was an instant success both with the public and with officials, winning the Lenin Prize the following year.<sup>81</sup> Reviving Russian songs of an earlier era, whether revolutionary or folk, was a way of effacing the Stalin period and returning to safer moments of Soviet history, thus bolstering Khrushchev’s claims to be a true Leninist; whether Shostakovich and Shchedrin realised why song forms were likely to be approved, or whether they simply adapted to the mood of the times, they were both able to capitalise on the

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<sup>77</sup> Shchedrin, *Ne Tol’ko Liubov*, 12.

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid*, 120.

<sup>79</sup> Pauline Fairclough, *Dmitry Shostakovich* (London: Reaktion, 2019), 50–1.

<sup>80</sup> ‘Khrushchev on Culture: A Full Text with Notes on Ehrenburg, Evtushenkov, Sholokhov, Painting, Jazz, Cinema, Composers, Etc.’, ed. Evgenii Evtushenkov, *Encounter Pamphlet* 9 (1963): 29.

<sup>81</sup> Laurel E. Fay, *Shostakovich: A Life* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 202.

opportunity for approval. Shchedrin's stylised folk music struck exactly the right balance: there were pleasant melodies sung by happy people on a collective farm, and humorous jabs at the expense of amateur musicians which even laypeople could understand. This would have been enough for the authorities to approve of the work.

The next type of music which Shchedrin incorporates, however, which is woven through these other genres, consists of his more strictly operatic style. This is first heard in No. 6 of Act I – 'Fight and Appearance of Varvara Vasil'evna'. (Figure 2) In this episode, Varvara enters to discover workers idling about due to the arrival of Volodia, and reprimands everyone. Musically, she is introduced with a theme that will become her signature in nearly all of her subsequent appearances – a motif that either she sings, or accompanies her in the orchestra. The full sequence will be an arpeggiated figure with the scale degrees  $\hat{5} \hat{1} \hat{3} \hat{1} \hat{4}$ : a triad with an added fourth degree of the scale of the relative key, which is then followed by the same sequence one third lower. Her first entry exhibits only the first half of the sequence (Figure 3), but her theme is fully expressed in her second aria. (Figure 4) In a very Debussian manner, this distinctive melodic fragment stays consistent throughout the opera, but is situated in varying harmonic contexts (as the contrast between Figures 3 and 4 shows). At the start of her aria, for instance, Varvara's motif is paired with a pedal of scale degree  $\hat{5}$  in the bass, giving this fragment the sonic equivalence of a 6/4 chord. (Figure 4) A 6/4 chord, which serves a dissonant function in a tonal context, creates an unsettling beginning to Varvara's aria: though it is a melodic, lyrical phrase, it is situated in a dissonant context, a configuration which well reflects Varvara's internal conflict.

## №6. Драка и появление Варвары Васильевны

51

Иван Трофимов лезет в драку с Володей Гавриловым. Мишка, Гришка и Наташа их  
 Алlegro (♩. 138)

разнимают. Девушки визжат.

tutti

Tr-be con sord.

*p sub.*

Figure 2 *Not Love Alone*, first instance of the non-folk style writing, p. 51.

53

В.В.

те я ли? Свой кол - хов - ный дом не у - ва -

*f espress.*

*p*

*f espress.*

Figure 3 *Not Love Alone*, Varvara's first entry and introduction of her theme, p. 53.

210 Andante assai, sempre poco rubato (quasi improvisato) ♩=48-50

ВАРВАРА ВАСИЛЬЕВНА *p*

По ле - сам куд - ря - вым, по го - рам гор - ба - тым,

Сог. V-le

*f* *p* *pp*

В.В. *f* *ten.* *p* (quasi cho)

по до - ли - нам ров - ным - всю - ду я хо - ди - ла. Все цве - ты, все цве - ты,

*ten.* *mf* *ten.* *p*

Figure 4 *Not Love Alone*, Varvara's theme fully expressed in her second aria, p. 144.

The beginning of No. 6 musically sets the stage for Varvara's entrance, and for her musical role in the opera. There is a sudden departure from the tonal elegance of the previous numbers, from the *chastushki* and the folk intonations. Varvara begins with a different timbre of music from what has been heard until this point: it wavers in indeterminate tonality, offers a more complex, dialogic orchestral accompaniment, and consists of text in her own words that advances the action on stage rather than stock phrases in rhyme. (Figure 5) Varvara is a character who breaks free from the idealised world of the *kolkhoz* with both her vocal line – which departs from folk music and is independent even from its orchestral accompaniment – and her text, which is not limited to *chastushki*.

Agitato con fuoco, sempre rubato (♩:120)  
ВАРВАРА ВАСИЛЬЕВНА *ff* (с сжатости) *V*

ра - до - сти?

285 Менo mosso *a tempo* *acceler.*

Но за - то и без го - ря?

Archi *ff marc.*

Figure 5 *Not Love Alone*, an excerpt from Varvara's final arioso, demonstrating an accompaniment quite independent of her vocal line, p. 194.

While at first the numbers alternate, with folk choruses followed by operatic arias in sequence, by Act III, Varvara's music and the folk music intertwine with each other – and with other unsettling musical elements. No. 22, for example, opens with a folk duet: two lovers hum in thirds in the background as Varvara awaits Volodia at the rendezvous point. As the lyrical folk singing continues, however, the strings interject contrasting musical material: a segment that is based on the octatonic scale, followed by one that sounds modal (it is nearly Phrygian). (Figure 6) These two distinct musical threads are then joined by a third, Varvara's own reveries. Finally, one more element is added, the so-called 'Girl with the High Voice' singing her own cheerful *chastushki* to herself. (Figures 7 and 8) As the music continues, however, the folk

intonations of the lovers and the ‘Girl with the High Voice’ are contrasted with, and overcome by, the darker and more urgent tones of Varvara’s worries and by the orchestral accompaniment, which fits neither with the folk music nor with Varvara’s interjections, but constitutes a third voice, almost like that of an external narrator.

182

### № 22. Трио

Tempo precedente

АНЮТКА (за сценой)  
*pp sempre*

ПАРЕНЬ (за сценой)  
*pp sempre*

Tempo precedente

V. c., C. b.  
*mp senza fad.*

268

Появляются Анютка и парень. Медленно  
ВАРВАРА ВАСИЛЬЕВНА  
*mf*  
Че

А. В.

П. А. Р.

Archi  
*p*

268

*mf pp*

Figure 6 *Not Love Alone*, beginning of No. 22. See folk singing at the beginning, followed by the octatonic/Phrygian interjection.

(обличаю злодеев)

275

V.V. У - хо - дя...

Ан. *morendo*

Пар. *morendo*

275 Archi *p*

*mp*

Tempo precedente, ma pochissimo meno m sso

Ан. *morendo*

Пар. *morendo*

Tempo precedente, ma pochissimo meno mosso

V-ni Fl. Cel. Ob. *pp dolciss.*

Ob. *piano voce*

*pp*

*rit*

ВАРВАРА ВАСИЛЬЕВНА

Пас - ту -

*p<sup>3</sup>*

\*

Figure 7 Not Love Alone, all three styles combined, p. 188.

276 189

В.В. *Ad.*  
 ...хи у - же ста - до за - го - ня - ют...

В.В. *Ad.*  
 Людиполя вот-вот пой-дут...

Появляются Девушка с высо-  
 Девушка с высоким голосом

277 *Allegretto - mosco* *p dolciss. senza vibrato*  
 Об. уж как

*ten. Archi pizz.*  
*quasi echo morendo pp*

Дев. *свыщ. п.*  
 ...ким голосом, Иван Трофимок. Мишка и Гришка, они возвращаются с работы.  
 ночь ти - ха, не - да - де - ко до грё - ха: дай - те в про - во.

*simile*

Figure 8 *Not Love Alone*, all three styles combined, continued, p. 189.

The folk music does not emerge as the most prevalent or most important style in this opera. The final notes of the opera before the epilogue are those of anguish – and again, of musical complexity. Varvara’s theme is taken up by the whole orchestra, but for the first time, the motif itself is distorted. In bar 319 in the violins, the bar that initiates this development section, her theme is chromaticised, and with scale degree  $\hat{4}$  augmented, the overall effect is destabilising. Even when the trombones and trumpets enter with her original theme nine and eleven bars later, respectively, the distortions of her theme continue in the strings, revealing the crumbling of the stability of her character at this crucial moment. (Figure 9) The section ends in an ominous echo of this theme in the basses which is heard underneath a sustained scale degree  $\hat{2}$  and finally settling on an unaccompanied  $\hat{5}$  – in other words, the final encounter with Varvara’s theme is unstable, and left unresolved. (Figure 10) Shchedrin must have known, however, that a Soviet opera could not end this way – with no tonal resolution and no plot resolution. There are two different versions of the epilogue, therefore, which he added to follow this scene: an epilogue used in the revival productions after 2016, and an epilogue apparently used in the original.<sup>82</sup> The revised version returns full circle to the melody sung by the female chorus at the beginning of the opera; the original includes a rhythmic drone by the chorus overlaid by instructions about farming. Both send a clear message, however: life is back to normal, and no personal conflict has ruined the happiness or stability of the farm.

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<sup>82</sup> One epilogue is included in the 1965 edition of the score I have procured, but this is not a version of which there are any recordings. Recordings of the recent productions have included this second version that I mention.

218 Варвара Васильевна медленно уходит. ЗАТЕМНЕНИЕ  
Andante espressivo (♩.63)

The image displays a page of a musical score for a symphony. It features five systems of staves, each with a grand staff (treble and bass clefs). The first system is marked with a box containing the number 319 and the word 'tutti'. The second system includes the label 'Tr-ba' (Trumpet) and 'V. ni' (Violin). The third system is marked with a box containing the number 320 and the label 'Cor.' (Cornet). The fourth system includes the labels 'Tr-ni' (Trumpet), 'Tr-be' (Trumpet), and '(Timp.)' (Timpani). The fifth system is the final system on the page. The music is written in a key signature of one flat and a 3/4 time signature. The tempo and mood are indicated as 'Andante espressivo' with a metronome marking of 63 quarter notes per minute. The score shows complex rhythmic patterns and dynamics, characteristic of a dramatic and expressive passage.

Figure 9 *Not Love Alone*, the distortion of Varvara's theme, p. 218.

219

**321** a tempo  
 Archi,  
 Cor.  
*ff* *espress., legatissimo* *dim.*

rit.

**322** Fl.  
 V. ni  
*p cantabile, legato, poco espress.*

**323** Cl.  
 V. le  
*p espress., legato*

poco rit.

*pochiss. attacca*

Figure 10 *Not Love Alone* the real, unresolved ending before the tacked-on epilogue, p. 219.

In musical style and in plot, this opera departs significantly from Shchedrin's only clear model: Shaporin's *The Decembrists*, the most successful opera of the late Stalin period and one held out as an example of what opera should be by the authorities as late as the 1960s.<sup>83</sup> Goldman has argued that this opera is an essential case study precisely because it was revised constantly over the course of twenty-eight years – from 1925 to 1953 – until it finally met the approval of all of the committees involved in ensuring its ideological and musical correctness.<sup>84</sup> Svetlanov described the scene: 'when the opera was ready to be shown in the Bolshoi Theatre, a passionate fire was ignited between the historians, the critics, and the cultural workers'.<sup>85</sup> In addition to dozens of musicologists, politicians, and historians, Stalin himself had weighed in with his opinion.<sup>86</sup> Finally, it premiered on 23 June 1953 – a few months after his death on 5 March – probably because his death was needed to settle on a final version.<sup>87</sup> Eventually, in Svetlanov's words, 'the triumph of *The Decembrists* reigned in the Bolshoi Theatre'.<sup>88</sup> The triumph was so significant that not even the connection with Stalin could besmirch the opera: after all, it was based on an historical event that was equally important to Khrushchev as it was to Stalin, and represented the only successful epic opera created by a Soviet composer. It was not to be dismissed flippantly. It was still being shown regularly in the 1960s, during the time of the production and performances of *Not Love Alone*, so Shchedrin would have seen and known the approved recipe for success.<sup>89</sup>

Shaporin's first approach to this opera focused on the romance of two of the historical Decembrists, Ivan Annenkov and the French émigré Polina. But what began as a lyrical love story set against the backdrop of grand historical events, was deemed too personal and not epic

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<sup>83</sup> RGALI, f. 2329, o. 3, ed.kh. 876, 30.

<sup>84</sup> Goldman, 'Negotiating', 281.

<sup>85</sup> Evgenii Svetlanov, *Muzyka segodnia: stat'i, retsenzii, ocherki* (Moscow: Sovetskii kompozitor, 1985), 111.

<sup>86</sup> Goldman, 'Negotiating', 315.

<sup>87</sup> Goldman, 310, 315. Also Frolova-walker, 'The Soviet Opera Project', 212.

<sup>88</sup> Svetlanov, *Muzyka segodnia*, 111-2.

<sup>89</sup> RGALI, f. 2329, o. 3, ed.kh 1212, 1. It was shown six times in 1962, however, fewer than the number of performances of *Not Love Alone*.

enough.<sup>90</sup> Eventually, Shaporin rewrote the opera using fictional characters that better lived up to the ideals of Decembrism than the historical Decembrists themselves, and focused on the major events of the revolution rather than on the love story; in fact, even the historians agreed that they may need to sacrifice some accuracy in order to enhance ideological impact.<sup>91</sup> Historian Boris Syroechkovskii finally concluded that historical liberties could be forgiven since, in his words, ‘Shaporin’s opera will bring Soviet audiences artistic satisfaction and have definite politico-educational significance.’<sup>92</sup>

The music of *The Decembrists* matches this grand ideological goal. It opens with a militaristic fanfare, and proceeds with pompous roles for the chorus, where the peasants sing of revolutionary consciousness, and the revolutionaries sing a rousing chorus which is now frequently performed as a choral concert piece.<sup>93</sup> There was a great deal in this to please: as Frolova-Walker has noted, it provided singable music reminiscent of Tchaikovsky and Musorgsky, included a ballet, a harrowing climax with the execution of the rebels, and even the hope of a better future.<sup>94</sup> But it also bore a great deal of resemblance to what Bullock has described as a ‘song opera’, lacking symphonic development and relying heavily on patriotic themes, or on mournful, sentimental ones.<sup>95</sup> The overall sound could scarcely have been more different from *Not Love Alone*: where one begins with a proclamatory trumpet and proceeds to be bombastic, patriotic, and public, the other begins with lilting celli and flutes, and proceeds to be humble, troubled, and intimate. Shchedrin had his model, the first and only successful Soviet grand opera, but rejected it. *Not Love Alone* was not grand, and yet the music was

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<sup>90</sup> Goldman, 'Negotiating', 284.

<sup>91</sup> *Ibid*, 317.

<sup>92</sup> *Ibid*, 318.

<sup>93</sup> This comes from personal observance in concert programmes in Russia, and also a perusal of YouTube, where a search of ‘The Decembrists’ in Russian or English brings up a plethora of choral performances.

<sup>94</sup> Frolova-Walker, 'The Soviet Opera Project', 212.

<sup>95</sup> Bullock, 'Staging Stalinism', 106.

pleasant enough on balance to pass the piano-vocal auditions. The music itself, therefore, was not enough to substantiate the banishment of this opera.

### **Theories for Cancellation**

Before access was granted to Shchedrin's personal papers, it was only possible to guess why the opera was removed. Until now, speculation has revolved around themes of amorality, box-office failure, incorrect portrayal of Soviet ethics, and too much realism. The first topic, amorality, is one that Shchedrin himself suggested as the culprit in 2014: since the moral terrain under Khrushchev was complicated, the impropriety of the romance between Varvara and Volodia could have been too much for Soviet sensibilities.<sup>96</sup> At first glance, this seems plausible: though it is frequently written that a sexual revolution accompanied the Thaw, some historians argue that the Khrushchev years actually witnessed an intensification of trends in regulating moral behaviour that began under Stalin, rather than a revolution.<sup>97</sup> Khrushchev at first expressed a softening toward moral practice, stating that expulsion from the Party for personal matters would end.<sup>98</sup> But action did not conform to rhetoric. Instead, the number of Communists expelled for family-related moral violation either remained constant or grew.<sup>99</sup> Records reveal scores of court cases of Communists convicted of 'unworthy conduct in the family', and even include official reprimands for marrying and not having children, which was against policy.<sup>100</sup> Moralists of the day insisted that regulating matters of the family was becoming a matter of urgency since that is where the remnants of capitalism lay.<sup>101</sup> Whether

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<sup>96</sup> Abassova, 'Not Love Alone', Mariinsky.ru.

<sup>97</sup> Deborah A. Field, *Private Life and Communist Morality in Khrushchev's Russia* (New York: Peter Lang, 2007), 103. Edward Cohn, 'Sex and the Married Communist: Family Troubles, Marital Infidelity, and Party Discipline in the Postwar USSR, 1945–64', *Russian Review* 68, no. 3 (2009): 429–50. Esp. 442–9.

<sup>98</sup> Cohn, 'Married Communist', 439.

<sup>99</sup> *Ibid.*, 442.

<sup>100</sup> *Ibid.*, 446, 449.

<sup>101</sup> S. Kosolapov and O. Krutova, *Navstennye printsipy stroitelia kommunizma* (Moscow: Moskovskii rabochii, 1962), 63.

moral strictness intensified or remained constant between 1956 and 1964, however, proper Communists were supposed to observe the official sexual ethic, and *Not Love Alone* defied this code. Varvara, probably past childbearing age, interferes with the betrothal of Volodia and Natasha, two young Communists likely to have a fruitful marriage. Varvara's situation would render the moral structure of the tale dubious to Soviet officialdom.

There are two flaws with the explanation of cancelling the opera for moral reasons alone, however. First, though the libretto was full of this kind of scandal, this was practically eliminated on stage. The director, Ansimov, began to fear the Freudian dynamic during early rehearsals and rejected the motif. He diminished the age gap by replacing the mature Larisa Avdeeva with a much younger mezzo-soprano, Irina Arkhipova and her cover Valentina Klepatskaia; he also found an older Volodia.<sup>102</sup> In 2017, Shchedrin ceded this point when he acknowledged that Ansimov transformed the opera beyond recognition and made the romantic leads, 'simply two heroes of labour'.<sup>103</sup> The second flaw with the argument that the opera was too scandalous, however, is that especially when the Freudian motif is removed, it demonstrates the correct Soviet ethic. Varvara makes the right choice as far as the Party is concerned by sacrificing an affair for duty. Shchedrin has contradicted himself and used both sides of the coin to explain away the opera's cancellation: on the one hand, he agreed with his friend the conductor Konstantin Simonov, who had been at the premiere, when he said, 'The opera broke down because everyone was afraid of sex!'<sup>104</sup> On the other hand, he claimed that it was not the scandal of the opera, but the reinterpretation of the opera without the scandal that sealed its fate. With the intrigue destroyed, the meaning was lost.<sup>105</sup> It would make more sense if it was removed for too much scandal shown on stage, but since it was screened through the audition,

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<sup>102</sup> *Classical Music News*, Nikolai Efimovich, 'V bolshom teatre uboyalis' seksa', 12.12.2007, <http://www.classicalmusicnews.ru/interview/rodion-wedrin-v-bolshom-teatre-uboyalis-seksa/>. Accessed 19.06.2017.

<sup>103</sup> Shchedrin, interview with author, 17 March 2017.

<sup>104</sup> Efimovich, 'V bolshom teatre...'

<sup>105</sup> Shchedrin, interview with author, 18 March 2017.

and then ‘softened’<sup>106</sup> during rehearsals, there should have been enough moderation throughout the production process to avoid a shock at the premiere.

There is also a problem with the theory of box-office flop. Comprehensive repertoire statistics from the Department of Musical Institutions in the Ministry of Culture reveal that in 1962, *Not Love Alone* was performed in two theatres for a total of seven performances, and garnered 11,188 viewers.<sup>107</sup> Despite the fact that this was labelled a failure as an opera, it attracted more viewers than all of the other Soviet operas except nine (out of forty-six). The most popular operas were those such as Prokofiev’s *War and Peace* (31 performances, 41,311 viewers), *Obruchenie v monastyre* (*Betrothal in a Monastery*, 62 performances, 51,068 viewers), K. Lastov’s *Doch’ Kuby* (*Daughter of Cuba*, 70 performances, 54,213 viewers).<sup>108</sup> Dzerzhinsky’s *Sud’ba cheloveka* (*The Fate of Man*, premiered 1961) fared best, attracting larger audiences than any other single Soviet opera (61 performances, 62,487 viewers – despite the fact that the opinion of the Union of Composers was that this music was far weaker than that of *Not Love Alone*).<sup>109</sup> But *Not Love Alone* drew larger than average audiences, certainly more than the other opera about a *kolkhoz*, Klara Katsman’s *High Water*, which premiered in 1962, lasted for only four performances, and drew just over 3,000 viewers.<sup>110</sup> From all of this information, it is not accurate to call *Not Love Alone* a box-office flop. This opera drew audiences of sizes greater than those of many ballets and operas that were allowed to stay on stage much longer. What this does reveal, however, is that opinions were divided, but it was the opinions of the Ministry of Culture officials that prevailed.<sup>111</sup> From these records and from

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<sup>106</sup> Ibid.

<sup>107</sup> RGALI, f. 2329, o. 3, ed.kh. 1212: 24.

<sup>108</sup> Ibid.

<sup>109</sup> Ibid. ‘Materialy obsuzhdeniia opery R. Shchedrin “Ne tol’ko liubov’’, sostoiavshegosia 13 ianv. 1962 g. v SK SSSR’, *Sovetskaia muzyka* 280, no. 3 (1962): 82-6.

<sup>110</sup> Ibid.

<sup>111</sup> RGALI, F. 2329, o. 3, ed.kh. 1212.

the surveys, a richly textured picture of how this opera was received by officials, artists, and the public begins to emerge. It was far from a unilateral disaster.

Another explanation is that the story struck a personal chord with the Minister of Culture: the heroine's struggles bear undeniable resemblances to Furtseva's life. The most powerful woman in Soviet history, Furtseva was appointed secretary of the Moscow Communist Party in 1952 and demoted to Minister of Culture in 1960 after she was caught criticising Khrushchev on the phone by the KGB.<sup>112</sup> Nicknamed 'Catherine III', she became known for iron control, erratic decisions, and a complete lack of artistic taste.<sup>113</sup> Her tenure as Minister was destructive. She often appeared unexpectedly at dress rehearsals and cancelled performances, as she did with Shchedrin's *Anna Karenina* in 1971.<sup>114</sup> She restricted the most famous artists, such as opera singer Galina Vishnevskaya and ballerina Maya Plisetskaya from leaving the country,<sup>115</sup> and nearly destroyed the career of choreographer Leonid Iakobson.<sup>116</sup>

She was also known to have modelled her wardrobe and behaviour after the 1939 film *Chlen pravitel'stva* (*A Member of Government*), which, just like *Not Love Alone*, is about a female leader of a collective farm.<sup>117</sup> The similarities between Furtseva's life and Varvara's are numerous: both women were appointed to positions of unusually great responsibility; both sacrificed potential family lives for their work; both were attracted to – and almost destroyed by – younger men.<sup>118</sup> Varvara's costumes even reflect Furtseva's wardrobe – she was assigned the same structured dresses and stark, angular trench coat that both Furtseva and the *Member*

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<sup>112</sup> Laurence Senelick, "'A Woman's Kingdom': Minister of Culture Furtseva and Censorship in the Post-Stalinist Russian Theatre', *New Theatre Quarterly* 26, no. 1 (2010): 16-24. esp. 17-9.

<sup>113</sup> Janice Ross, *Like a Bomb Going Off: Leonid Yakobson and Ballet as Resistance in Soviet Russia* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2015), 390.

<sup>114</sup> Senelick, 'Woman's Kingdom', 23. Furtseva was scandalised by Shchedrin's ballet *Anna Karenina*, and dramatically cancelled it after storming out of a rehearsal. See: Plisetskaya, *I, Maya*, 306.

<sup>115</sup> Galina Vishnevskaya, *Galina - istoriia zhizni* (Moscow: Gorizont, Slovo, 1991), 134. See also Simon Alexander Morrison, *Bolshoi Confidential: Secrets of the Russian Ballet from the Rule of the Tsars to Today* (London: Liveright Publishing Corporation, 2016), 340-50.

<sup>116</sup> Ross, *Like a Bomb*, 390-391.

<sup>117</sup> Senelick, 'Woman's Kingdom', 23.

<sup>118</sup> *Ibid*, 20.

of *Government* heroine were known for wearing.<sup>119</sup> Shchedrin described Furtseva as intelligent, emotional, and resourceful despite the fact that she had come from a humble background – the same way he depicts Varvara in the opera.<sup>120</sup> Even if Shchedrin did not directly model Varvara on Furtseva, it is likely he would have known he was playing with fire by closely aligning their characteristics. An unfavourable comparison between Furtseva and Varvara could easily have derailed the opera. As late as 2017, Shchedrin still spoke of Furtseva cautiously, saying that though they agreed on nothing, ‘and she understood absolutely nothing about the arts’, she was a strong leader with a difficult life and must be respected.<sup>121</sup>

Another version is that it was simply not the right style for the Bolshoi. Shchedrin espoused this view in 2017, when he explained, ‘it was a period...when everything concluded with the chorus singing “glory, glory, glory, the end”, but this opera ended with an ellipsis... they spit on this because they said, “oh, it’s just about a *kolkhoz*”.’<sup>122</sup> His next best guess after this theory is that it was dismissed because the ‘chamber tone’ of his opera ‘was ahead of its time’.<sup>123</sup> Brik’s account of the cancellation is similar to this version: she concluded, ‘Shchedrin composed music that was intoned after the world of the *chastushki*. Staged at the Bolshoi Theatre, which was used to kings and courtesans, the opera was not successful’.<sup>124</sup> In addition, Brik explained away the opera’s failure with the Bolshoi’s conservatism, stating, ‘Just remember *Carmen* and *The Government Inspector* – all of these premieres flopped. It was the same thing with *Lady Macbeth of Mtsensk*’.<sup>125</sup> But her explanation makes no more sense than Shchedrin’s. The Bolshoi may have been accustomed to ‘kings and courtesans’ in Tsarist Russia, and it might still maintain many of those operas in the repertoire, but this was 1961,

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<sup>119</sup> Natalia Korneeva, *Ekaterina Furtseva: politicheskaja melodrama* (Moscow: Algoritm, 2007), 128-9.

<sup>120</sup> Shchedrin, interview with author, 18 March 2017.

<sup>121</sup> Ibid.

<sup>122</sup> Ibid.

<sup>123</sup> Shchedrin, *Memories*, 102.

<sup>124</sup> Katanian, *Lilia*, 179-80.

<sup>125</sup> Ibid, 180.

and modern opera was in high demand. The facts that it is not a classical-style opera, that it is scandalous like *Carmen*, or that it is too small, does not explain its removal.

Tyshler, the production designer, believed that it was not the scandal of content, however, but the shock of the presentation which doomed the opera. His design concept was a ‘radical departure’, as Shchedrin has proclaimed it, from the conventional style of the Bolshoi in those days.<sup>126</sup> What was expected was a display of red banners, large machinery, stark Soviet figures, and something patriotic. A few years earlier, the Ministry of Culture had even ordered the floorboards of the stage reinforced so authentic industrial equipment could be used for sets.<sup>127</sup> But Tyshler did not make use of this opportunity; instead, he departed from typical Soviet magnitude. He built a set of delicate birch trees and clothed the characters in multi-coloured raincoats, rather than in patriotic red and black.<sup>128</sup> In the composer’s words, ‘instead of the glow of the bright future awaiting mankind we saw the dim, washed-out grey of everyday life’.<sup>129</sup> Tyshler came from a village 200 kilometres from Moscow where, he explained, ‘everyone walks around in those raincoats!’<sup>130</sup> He created sets and costumes that evoked familiar scenes rather than imaginary, idealised ones.

Both Tyshler and Shchedrin agreed that no one, ‘from the Ministry of Culture workers to the chorus to the orchestra...understood his decorations and costumes’.<sup>131</sup> Later, Shchedrin affirmed his love for Tyshler’s decorations, but suggested that the realism had hurt the production, mentioning, ‘the costumes and decorations of Tyshler were absolutely dissonant for that time’.<sup>132</sup> There was a tension between the roots of the opera as a ‘*kolkhoz*-style *Eugene Onegin*’, with its connotations of nineteenth-century peasant charm and cheerfulness, and the

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<sup>126</sup> Shchedrin, *Memories*, 101.

<sup>127</sup> Morrison, *Bolshoi Confidential*, 269.

<sup>128</sup> Shchedrin, *Memories*, 101.

<sup>129</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>130</sup> Shchedrin, interview with author, 18 March 2017.

<sup>131</sup> Vera Chaikovskaya, *Tyshler: neposlushny vzrosly*, (Moscow: Molodaia gvardia, 2010), 210.

<sup>132</sup> Shchedrin, interview with author, 17 March 2017.

sombre reality that Tyshler created, dark with only splashes of colour. The incongruity between the idealism expected of a pastoral opera and the visual realism was not in alignment with Soviet ideals, even if the critics could not pinpoint exactly why. Tyshler, himself a remnant of the 1920s avant-garde, was here foreshadowing the debate around modernism – particularly in showing the darker side of society – that would intensify in the 1970s, and which I discuss in Chapter 2.

Tyshler's and Shchedrin's proclamations that the sets and costumes were the reason for the opera's failure, however, are contradicted by the archival evidence. When he made those statements, Shchedrin must have been either making the decorations a scapegoat, or genuinely forgetting a particular Bolshoi Theatre meeting in 1961. Transcripts of meetings surrounding the production of the opera prove the reverse of these statements to be true: there was only one thing that all of the assessors of *Not Love Alone* agreed on, that the costumes and stage design were genius.<sup>133</sup> It is possible that though they claimed to love the design, the atypical visuals, when combined with the plot, may have finally revealed to the establishment that this was not a laudatory statement about socialist farming practices. Though charming, the realism depicted a grim picture of sacrificing personal happiness for Party goals in daily life. To add insult to injury, the opera hinted at the human consequences of the Great Patriotic War by highlighting the lack of men in the village at a time when criticising anything about this so-called triumph was not acceptable.<sup>134</sup> Even if the overall message was displeasing, however, the design was not solely at fault.

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<sup>133</sup> See RGALI, f. 648, o. 11, ed.kh. 401: 46.

<sup>134</sup> Roger Markwick, 'The Great Patriotic War in Soviet and Post-Soviet Collective Memory', in *The Oxford Handbook of Postwar European History*, ed. Dan Stone (Oxford University Press, 2012): 693-713. 699.

## New Evidence

These accounts all converge on one idea: something about this opera did not fit the style of the Bolshoi. Shchedrin believed the problem was scale – the chamber style was not grand enough. Brik believed the problem was the theme – the Bolshoi was accustomed to historical rather than contemporary plots. Tyshler believed the problem was the aesthetic – a light-hearted presentation contrasted with the pomposity of the Bolshoi's *oeuvre*. But there were other factors involved. The bickering and divergent opinions about the opera in the artistic establishments is revealed by a slew of primary sources: first, a previously unknown transcript of a debate about the opera by a committee at the Bolshoi Theatre after the first dress rehearsal (22 December 1961); second, finance records of the Bolshoi Theatre from 1961-1962; third, a meeting of the editorial board of the Bolshoi's internal magazine, *Sovetskii Artist*, about how to write about the opera given contradictory opinions (6 January 1962); fourth, a record of a discussion about the opera by the Union of Composers of the USSR (13 January 1962); and finally, a set of audience surveys taken by *Sovetskii artist* (8 March 1962) and followed up by a discussion (19 March 1962).<sup>135</sup> The first document, detailing the discussion on 22 December 1961 is particularly revealing, but surprisingly, has not been subsequently mentioned by Tyshler, Shchedrin, Ansimov, or Pokrovsky in interviews or memoirs. In fact, in an interview in 2017, Shchedrin asserted that to his knowledge no members of the Ministry of Culture watched the premiere, a statement proven inaccurate given his presence at this meeting with those exact officials.<sup>136</sup> And yet, this particular meeting reveals not just the sources of

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<sup>135</sup> RGALI, f. 648, o. 11, e.kh. 11. Researcher records sheet confirms that this has not been previously accessed; RGALI, f. 648, o. 11, ed.kh. 355; 'Maerialy obsuzhdeniia opery R. Shchedrin "Ne tol'ko liubov", sostoiavshegosia 13 ianv. 1962 g. v SK SSSR', *Sovetskaia muzyka* 280, no. 3 (1962): 82-6; RGALI, f. 648, o. 11, e.kh. 401; RGALI, F. 648, o. 11, e.kh. 401a; An editorial published in September 1962 also adds useful insight. See E. Dobrynina, "'Ne tol'ko liubov...'", *Sovetskaia muzyka* 286, no. 9 (1962): 42-7.

<sup>136</sup> RGALI, f. 648, o. 11, ed.kh. 11.

controversy over *Not Love Alone*, but the key debates happening in opera at the beginning of the Thaw.

The meeting, assembled to evaluate *Not Love Alone* after the dress rehearsal, embodied the new kind of committee that the Ministry of Culture had formed in the previous decade. In 1955, the Ministry decided to use artistic councils within Soviet theatres to reinvigorate the landscape of Soviet opera. The theatres were ordered to widen the membership of artistic councils – from a small group of artistic leaders within the theatres – to more inclusive bodies.<sup>137</sup> This wider body is the kind of council represented in the transcript, where fifteen people attended the final dress rehearsal and met to offer their suggestions. In addition to Shchedrin, Katanian, and Ansimov, these included composers Tikhon Khrennikov and Aram Khachaturian; representatives from the Ministry of Culture Tat'iana Leontovskaia and Vartanian; musicologists; Semen Shlifstein and Aleksandr Medvedev; director of the Bolshoi Museum Viktoria Krieger; stage directors Vadim Ryndin and Boris Pokrovsky; and the executive director of the Bolshoi, Vladimir Pakhomov.<sup>138</sup>

This document confirms there were two main worries about the production from the standpoint of the Ministry of Culture: the portrayal of the *kolkhoz*, and the tragedy of the heroine's situation. Over the course of the conversation two camps formed – the composers were enamoured with the opera, while the government representatives espoused a cautious, and even hostile attitude, and cited the objections listed above. The Ministry officials failed to grasp the subtext and found flaws relating to the portrayal of Soviet people and institutions. They did not appreciate Shchedrin's nuance, and instead wanted to rewrite the opera so that it concluded with a boisterous finale, as opposed to 'an ellipsis', as the composer has

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<sup>137</sup> Christina Ezrahi, *Swans of the Kremlin: Ballet and Power in Soviet Russia* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2012), 74.

<sup>138</sup> RGALI, f. 648, o. 11, ed.kh. 2.

characterised his ending.<sup>139</sup> The best verdict they could give was to suggest a delayed premiere after serious adaptation.

In musical terms, everyone agreed it was a success, and the artists believed it triumphed even in political terms, even if the politicians did not. Khrennikov praised the subtlety, creativity, and contemplative nature of the musical material, while also adding an ideological comment:

This is a serious step toward bringing real, good, modern sensations of theatrical action back, a liberation from those norms which have disappeared but were with us for a long time. This is a sizeable step toward firming up theatrical realism.<sup>140</sup>

Khachaturian agreed:

Throughout the opera, the musical material showed itself to be enormously interesting...This opera is a victory for Soviet music and theatre. It is fantastic. It's a huge contribution to the development of the genre of opera.<sup>141</sup>

Neither Khachaturian nor Khrennikov was known for false praise. In fact, they had both earned reputations for being staunch critics and formidable gatekeepers for music of the stage.<sup>142</sup> The expert opinions had been voiced in favour.

The Ministry of Culture representatives, however, voiced their critiques, which at points were as predictable as they were absurd. Krieger was offended by what she considered a flippant portrayal of the *kolkhoz*, and particularly by the fact the workers appear lazy. Krieger was an infamous character, known in artistic circles for such outbursts, and numerous records detail how musicians and directors puzzled over her artistic commentary.<sup>143</sup> In this case, she gawked at the fact that the characters are not shown working. In her understanding, this also meant the title was a misnomer:

The opera is called *Not Love Alone*, but it should be called *Love Alone*, getting rid of the 'not' because while there may be rain on stage, or any kind of weather, people just play around but don't do anything! Of course, this doesn't mean that there should be a tractor on stage, but the

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<sup>139</sup> Shchedrin, interview with author, 17 March 2017.

<sup>140</sup> RGALI, f. 648, o. 11, ed.kh. 11: 6.

<sup>141</sup> Ibid, 8.

<sup>142</sup> Schwarz, *Musical Life*, 274-5.

<sup>143</sup> RGALI, f. 648, o. 11, e.kh. 401: 46.

opera does not afford the opportunity to see people in the *kolkhoz* working hard. It looks like a *kolkhoz* where people only fool around.<sup>144</sup>

What is interesting about Krieger's concern about the portrayal of collective farming, however, was that it was not unfounded. Rather, she synthesised the political mood of the time and was translating it into what she thought would be necessary in opera. At the Twenty-Second Party Congress, Khrushchev made the promotion and praise of farming a top priority.<sup>145</sup> In the same speech he demanded that literature and art should play a role 'in deepening and expanding the Party's ideological influence on the masses'.<sup>146</sup> In other words, he voiced his priorities, and then ordered that art and literature should reflect and support those priorities. Furtseva subsequently suggested creating Socialist Realist productions to show the 'heroic' labours of agricultural workers.<sup>147</sup> The director of the Bolshoi Theatre at the time also recognised the importance of taking the decisions of the Twenty-Second Party Congress into account for determining repertoire choices.<sup>148</sup> *Not Love Alone*, though adhering to Furtseva's and Khrushchev's direct requests, displayed a different picture of Soviet life from the one that Khrushchev had so passionately promoted, and more than any other opera produced that year, it contradicted his ideology. There is evidence to suggest that Khrushchev himself was more forgiving of artistic experimentation than his watchdogs,<sup>149</sup> but since it was only the lower-level officials who saw this production, they clearly erred on the side of caution to avoid potential embarrassment for the regime. They were aware this was not the ideal moment for an

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<sup>144</sup> RGALI, f. 648, o. 11, ed.kh. 11: 12.

<sup>145</sup> Nikita Khrushchev, 'An Account to the Party and the People, Report of the C.C.C.P.S.U. To the 22nd Congress of the Party, October 17, 1961' (Moscow: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1961), 68–9.

<sup>146</sup> *Ibid.*, 132.

<sup>147</sup> Kenneth Ciboski, 'A Woman in Soviet Leadership: The Political Career of Madame Furtseva', *Canadian Slavonic Papers* 14, no. 1 (1972): 1–14. 10.

<sup>148</sup> RGALI, f. 648, o. 11, ed.kh. 11: 36.

<sup>149</sup> Nikita Khrushchev, trans. and ed. Strobe Talbott, *Khrushchev Remembers* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1970), 522.

opera exposing the human cost of Khrushchev's pet agricultural project, especially when the industry was in dramatic decline after the disaster of the Virgin Lands programme.<sup>150</sup>

Krieger's second attack on *Not Love Alone* regarded the dramatic line and the characters:

In the third act it's necessary to eliminate the tragedy. It's not permissible to hold the public for so much time because she [the heroine] is anxious because of some empty young man. I think this is a huge mistake. We have to think of something to correct the line of drama. We cannot show light-hearted things in the Bolshoi Theatre, and here the *kolkhoz* is portrayed as a lightweight thing.<sup>151</sup>

Her criticism underpins why it was so difficult to write a Soviet opera: the characters had to be Soviet, but all Soviet characters had to be good, and life had to be displayed in a realistic manner (which meant including labour), but not so realistic a manner that the characters be unhappy at any point. The opera that Krieger seems to have imagined is one in which good Soviets all work hard together on a collective farm without too much talk of emotion. Needless to say, that does not comprise the most thrilling abstract for an opera. Criticism like hers was not unique either to this situation or to opera, however. In 1963, during a similar artistic meeting, the secretary of the Kirov Theatre's Party Bureau criticised Iakobson's ballet *Klop (The Bedbug)*, based on Mayakovsky's poem, for the same shortcomings – failing to develop of the theme of labour, and failing to develop positive heroes.<sup>152</sup> These difficulties in writing compelling plots on the themes of labour had many other precedents. To name only one composer as an example, in the late 1920s and early 1930s, Shostakovich was involved in three separate ballet collaborations revolving around contemporary Soviet themes – one about a Soviet football team, one about factory workers, and one set on a collective farm. All three were criticised by the press and by officials for insufficiently developing positive heroes, who appeared as two-dimensional characters, or for inadvertently giving the best music and dance

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<sup>150</sup> Leonhard, *Kremlin Since*, 352-3. The Virgin Lands programme, or campaign, was Krushchev's disastrous attempt to dramatically increase the Soviet Union's agricultural production. Due to inhospitable climates, infertile land, manpower shortage, and faulty machinery, the programme not only failed, but cost much in lives in resources. See Vn Tomilin, "The Campaign for Cultivation of "Virgin Lands", 1954-1959", *Voprosy istorii*, no. 9 (2009): 81-93.

<sup>151</sup> RGALI, f. 648, o. 11, ed.kh. 11: 13.

<sup>152</sup> Erhazi, *Swans*, 198.

numbers to the bourgeoisie capitalist characters.<sup>153</sup> By the 1960s, therefore, Soviet composers had been consistently failing for decades to create characters that met the standards of flawless, ideological, heroic socialism. Even so, officials refused to concede that these standards might be impossible to meet, and clung tightly to the hope that the perfect Soviet opera was just waiting to be written.

Only a few people grasped the multivalence of the opera, and the appeal of the *kolkhoz* shown through intimate, personal points of view. Another director in the theatre, Ryndin, was one of those who did. What the Ministry representatives considered to be a flaw, Ryndin understood to be the opera's greatest asset:

The thing that makes this opera worthy is that in this *kolkhoz*, people don't ride tractors or talk about production – people don't go to see operas like that. This is the first time I have seen a show where we see the *kolkhoz* worker as a person, we hear about his feelings – and *kolkhoz* workers have rights to their feelings.<sup>154</sup>

Ryndin's opinion was the most accurate prediction of audience reactions – in the surveys gathered after the performances of *Not Love Alone*, many viewers would echo exactly these sentiments.<sup>155</sup>

Another Ministry official, Leontovskaia, raised other concerns about the portrayal of the *kolkhoz*, and especially about the character of Varvara: 'Why is there such a big difference between the way Varvara is portrayed,' she questioned, 'and the portrayal of all of the other characters?'<sup>156</sup> She asserted that it is strange to her that in the second act, everyone is celebrating and wearing party dresses, but Varvara is wearing the same costume she was wearing in the first act. 'Why is everyone resting while she, poor thing, is working? She is a young woman, not much older than Natasha. Why show her in a different sphere?'<sup>157</sup> The

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<sup>153</sup> Marina Ilichova, 'Shostakovich's Ballets', in *The Cambridge Companion to Shostakovich*, ed. Pauline Fairclough (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008): 198-212. esp. 200, 206, 207.

<sup>154</sup> RGALI, f. 648, o. 11, ed.kh. 11: 29.

<sup>155</sup> RGALI, f. 648, o. 11, e.kh. 401: 5.

<sup>156</sup> RGALI, f. 648, o. 11, ed.kh. 11: 15.

<sup>157</sup> *Ibid*, 16.

comment about clothes could have been referring to Furtseva and how she was set apart from others by her wardrobe,<sup>158</sup> but this comment also demonstrates the problem with minimising the age gap between the two protagonists. It was, in fact, she herself (and Ansimov) who insisted they minimise the age gap when reviewing an earlier version, but now that rendered the plot incoherent.<sup>159</sup> Varvara is *supposed* to be much older than Natasha, and she is not supposed to be like the other workers; if she is just like one of the others, the dramatic tension disintegrates. She has sacrificed personal happiness and love for responsibility and duty. She cannot logically celebrate as the others do and maintain the integrity of the plot, but that very plot was what the Ministry found unacceptable.

Ultimately, Leontovskaia came around to Krieger's chief concern, that the *kolkhoz* is exhibited in too flippant a manner. None of Leontovskaia's suggestions to allay this flaw, however, were feasible from an artistic standpoint. For example, she suggested that the chorus should not enter at the end because it might look like they are doing so to observe Varvara, and it would 'make it seem as if in the *kolkhoz* people are only concerned with love, and that there is a heightened awareness of intimate questions', rather than a knowledge of labour.<sup>160</sup> Instead, she suggested that the chorus stay in the wings, which would have left Varvara on stage alone with no vocal lines and no blocking.<sup>161</sup> Leontovskaia's recommendation, therefore, was to delay the premiere and keep working on the production so it could earn 'in its entirety and in all of its components its needed place'.<sup>162</sup> The other bureaucrats either agreed or passed harsher judgments. Medvedev commented, 'This is a necessary and grand work for the Bolshoi Theatre

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<sup>158</sup> Senelick, 'Woman's Kingdom', 17.

<sup>159</sup> In an earlier part of the conversation, Leontovskaia alluded to her participation in the editorial process, see RGALI, f. 648, o. 11, ed.kh. 11: 14.

<sup>160</sup> RGALI, f. 648, o. 11, ed.kh. 11: 18.

<sup>161</sup> Ibid.

<sup>162</sup> Ibid.

as a matter of principle...but you oughtn't think that work on this opera is done...'.<sup>163</sup>

Vartanian went even further:

We don't want to deliver a blow to the work of the Bolshoi Theatre or to a Soviet Composer, but we need to continue to consider whether this production should see the light of day...I don't want my speech to be seen as an administrative order, but I personally advise that we do not hurry with the premiere of this opera.<sup>164</sup>

The opinion of the Ministry of Culture had been voiced: it was necessary to adapt the opera or to cancel it altogether, and a repetition of the twenty-eight-year saga of *The Decembrists* loomed on the horizon.

It was a catch-22, however, because the proposed adaptations were nonsensical and contradictory; it was unlikely that adhering to them could benefit the coherence of the opera. In addition, they all seemed to miss the fact that the things they wanted to change were actually the point of the opera – by its very nature, it was not grandiose, but personal, and the substance of the opera is based not on perfect people, but on suffering, flawed ones. The colourful insights offered by the bureaucrats, however, were aimed to reverse these effects: they ranged from rewriting the nature of the characters to the tone of the music. Shlifstein and Leontovskaia were both particularly concerned about Volodia, insisting that Shchedrin 'show that Volodia is a Bolshevik... labouring and over-fulfilling demands.'<sup>165</sup> But that, again, would unravel the whole plot. Both the libretto and short story reveal that he is not a good Bolshevik, let alone a good man. He plays with the affections of two women. He is lazy. When, upon his arrival, Varvara asks what types of labour he knows how to do, he responds, 'well, in the morning, I drink tea', and then confirms he knows how to smoke as well.<sup>166</sup> Shchedrin even called him a 'worthless greenhorn'.<sup>167</sup>

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<sup>163</sup> Ibid, 21.

<sup>164</sup> Ibid, 21-3.

<sup>165</sup> Ibid, 25-6.

<sup>166</sup> Shchedrin, *Ne tol'ko*, 72.

<sup>167</sup> Shchedrin, *Memories*, 99.

They were determined, however, to see Volodia how they wanted to see him, and asserted, ‘We can tell Volodia is a good man because of the music...from the moment the composer awards his hero with a beautiful melody, he is no longer a villainous character’.<sup>168</sup> Apparently those in charge were not familiar with Richard Wagner's Elsa, Verdi's Iago, or even Rimsky-Korsakov's Liubasha or Tchaikovsky's German – all of whom make shocking, immoral choices accompanied by beautiful melodies. The conviction that since he sings a beautiful melody he is good, displays one more reason that writing a Soviet opera was such a challenge for composers. The bureaucrats’ fundamental understanding of music and its relationship to drama was often so skewed that composers were forced either to comply with these ideological straitjackets and risk composing operas that would not hold together dramatically, or to deny them, as Shchedrin did, and incorporate nuance which would ultimately be misunderstood and dismissed by the Party.

These suggestions were anathema to the artistic team, who had had remained silent through this meeting until this point. Instead of surrendering, however, Katanian, Ansimov, and Shchedrin defended their work – a choice that would have been unfathomable during Stalin's lifetime when artists had reason to fear serious repercussions for dissent. The team offered the most complete explanation of the opera that they would ever give in any medium. Shchedrin and Ansimov both fought to direct the conversation back to the appropriate genre. Ansimov first tried to explain the subtext, commenting, ‘In our opinion, this opera boasts one particularity: in this text there is a substantial subtext, and it’s necessary to hear not what the participants of the production are saying, but what they are thinking.’<sup>169</sup> The fact that he had to explain what a subtext was did not bode well for his chances of persuading the committee. Katanian added his own defence by clarifying the purpose of the opera: ‘We wanted to show

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<sup>168</sup> RGALI, f. 648, o. 11, ed.kh. 11: 25-6.

<sup>169</sup> Ibid, 29.

that Varvara was heart-broken, that she had denied herself love, but at the same time, she is speaking different words. This, of course, is difficult to show in an opera.<sup>170</sup> Katanian also acknowledged that there would be those in the audience who would not grasp the subtext that suggests what it is other than love that is discussed. Ironically, there were those in the Ministry of Culture who did not grasp this either. Here, Shchedrin tactfully pivoted and addressed a question to Krieger: did she understand the genre, that the opera was a lyric, not a heroic opera?<sup>171</sup> By ‘lyric opera’, Shchedrin would have been aligning himself with the category of romantic operas focused on individual experiences of joy and suffering (for example, Tchaikovsky’s *Eugene Onegin*), rather than operas which use people as props to showcase national events or history (Shaporin’s *The Decembrists*, or more recently, Dzerzhinsky’s *The Fate of Man*). The lack of response suggests that the officials did not even understand the terms of the question.

Unpersuaded, Krieger still demanded to see labour on stage. Her provocation, however, prompted Shchedrin's response, which is his most thorough and bold apologia for this opera to date. Even later in life, in a 2017 interview, he would not expose what the true criticism of the opera had been. Shchedrin's speech, his only one during this meeting, shows powerful conviction that he has not publicly conveyed elsewhere about this opera:

I am satisfied with the production...I am satisfied with the decisions of the director. I see no way to add or rewrite.... I am certain that everything here is done correctly and precisely. We must elevate the level of our audience, not descend to their level. This opera is about the problem of the morality of Soviet man...

We must reach our goals, and we must think also about the morality of our people as portrayed in culture. This question is relevant and correct for our moment. We must resolve the question of love as our heroine resolved it in the opera.

Here the question is being asked of the authors of whether this production should be set aside. I believe that the production succeeded...  
I repeat, I believe that the production was successful.<sup>172</sup>

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<sup>170</sup> Ibid.

<sup>171</sup> Ibid.

<sup>172</sup> RGALI, f. 648, o. 11, ed.kh. 11: 30-1.

Shchedrin had voiced his opinion. He would not rewrite the opera, and as a result, he would see it removed.

The meeting ended without unanimity, but the Bolshoi's director, Pakhomov, decided on a course of action. At first, he asserted that since there was no finale, the authors would first need to put their heads together and come up with something new in text and music.<sup>173</sup> After suggesting a rewrite, however, he acknowledged the logistical difficulty of delaying the premiere – that the theatre schedule was packed. From 1-10 January, there were already two shows a day scheduled, and so the timetable would be too pressured at the theatre to adapt the production and fit in rehearsals. In the subsequent months, the theatre would be occupied with the premiere of the ballet *Spartak (Spartacus)*.<sup>174</sup> The Bolshoi was in a dilemma – while the Party functionaries had declared the production unfinished, there were neither resources nor time available to dedicate to reformulating this opera, and no one wanted to be the person to condemn an opera on a Soviet topic. Pakhomov's solution was to premiere the opera but be open to the possibility of continued editing. Even if a production is premiered, he explained, 'that does not mean it is complete. A production can be adjusted even after it has started to be shown'.<sup>175</sup> He noted recent examples of such post-premiere editing with Dzerzhinsky's opera *The Fate of Man* in 1961, and also a ballet by A. M Balanchivadze, *Stranitsy zhizni (The Pages of Life)*, which was edited for ten whole years.<sup>176</sup> He may have also had *The Decembrists* in mind. But unlike the unlucky Shaporin and Dzerzhinsky, who both submitted to rewriting until they met everyone's approval, Shchedrin had made it clear he had no intention of complying with such an overbearing process of rewriting – he refused to rewrite anything.<sup>177</sup>

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<sup>173</sup> Ibid, 39.

<sup>174</sup> Ibid, 35-6.

<sup>175</sup> Ibid, 39-43.

<sup>176</sup> Ibid, 42, 35.

<sup>177</sup> Ibid, 30-1.

After this gathering, there are no records of further meetings of the committee regarding this opera, but there are some other records. At a meeting of the Composers Union of the USSR on 13 January 1962, composers discussed Dzerzhinsky's *The Fate of Man* and Shchedrin's *Not Love Alone*.<sup>178</sup> Those present unanimously praised the music of *Not Love Alone*, especially in comparison to that of *The Fate of Man*. L. Poliakova, for example, commented, 'In contrast to *The Fate of Man*, Shchedrin's *Not Love Alone* impressed firstly with the music...the music is fresh, simple, lyrical, adorned with a deep psychological subtext and delicate humour, text, and it is sincerely folk-like.'<sup>179</sup> Kabalevsky hailed Shchedrin's opera as 'a superb composition which brings a fundamentally new stream – no, I would say which even opens up a new page in Soviet music, even if the third act does have some dramaturgical discrepancies.'<sup>180</sup> The 'dramaturgical discrepancy' of the third act was the only complaint about *Not Love Alone*; *The Fate of Man*, on the other hand, was condemned for its weak music, poor dramaturgy, and overall they agreed it was a mistake that it was produced at all.<sup>181</sup> An editorial from *Sovetskaia muzyka* that voiced similar opinions was published later that year, in September 1962. The author, E. Dobrynina recorded her reaction to a rehearsal she observed: 'I didn't expect to hear anything of such freshness, strength of inspiration, and most importantly, inarguably Soviet in its music, and its scenic situations.'<sup>182</sup> She then expressed her indignation at the resistance and negative comments the opera received later, even from its own director, Ansimov, especially when she deemed this work to be a 'revelation' compared to the 'primitive' opera *The Fate of Man*.<sup>183</sup>

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<sup>178</sup> 'Maerialy obsuzhdeniia opery R. Shchedrin "Ne tol'ko liubov", sostoiavshegosia 13 ianv. 1962 g. v SK SSSR', *Sovetskaia muzyka* 280, no. 3 (1962): 82-6.

<sup>179</sup> Ibid, 84.

<sup>180</sup> Ibid.

<sup>181</sup> Ibid, 84-6.

<sup>182</sup> Dobrynina, "'Ne tol'ko liubov"...', 43.

<sup>183</sup> Ibid, 46.

And yet, it was *Not Love Alone* that was cancelled, while *The Fate of Man* was left in production. The rest of the story must be pieced together through financial records, repertoire lists, other meetings, and references by third parties. *Not Love Alone* did premiere on 25 December 1961 as originally planned, which is the one performance that Svetlanov, Shchedrin, and Katanian mention in subsequent writings. What the accounting of the theatre reveals, however, is that the substantial sum of 10,000 roubles was allocated to *Not Love Alone* even for the following year, 1962. This sum was presumably for the revision of the opera. This amount represented a significant commitment for revision considering the original cost of production. In May 1961, *Not Love Alone* received the respectable budget of 36,000 roubles (an even higher budget of 45,000 roubles had been set in February, but this was later adjusted and the resources redistributed).<sup>184</sup> The budget was comparable to those of the two other Soviet-themed productions of that year: the ballet *The Pages of Life*, at 37,300 roubles,<sup>185</sup> and only slightly less than Dzerzhinsky's *The Fate of Man*, at 50,000 roubles (the opera that Shchedrin thought would not be produced because of its weakness).<sup>186</sup> For some perspective, some productions were given much lower budgets, such as Béla Bartok's ballet *Nochnoi gorod* (*The City at Night*, a version of *The Miraculous Mandarin*), which was awarded only 10,000 roubles for all of its expenses that same year.<sup>187</sup>

The budget of *Not Love Alone* is revealed as particularly substantial when considering two facts: first, the budgets of the other productions that year, and second, the overall financial situation of the Bolshoi Theatre. In 1961, the Bolshoi agreed with the Ministry of Culture to incorporate the Kremlin Palace Theatre as a *filial* (a subsumed partner). The fiscal implications only began to manifest in 1962, however, and proved that this project would be precariously expensive. The cooperation involved more artistic and administrative labour to cover the

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<sup>184</sup> RGALI, f. 648, o. 11, ed.kh. 355: 41, 74, 76, 79.

<sup>185</sup> Ibid, 39.

<sup>186</sup> Ibid, 43.

<sup>187</sup> Ibid, 47.

increased performance burden of two campuses, as well as the transportation and adaptation costs for productions. The administrative personnel costs alone were estimated at 68,000 additional roubles per month, and when adding the extra labour, transportation and miscellaneous costs, the entire theatre was strained.<sup>188</sup> The additional 10,000 roubles added to the budget of *Not Love Alone* in January 1962, on top of the 36,000 already spent, therefore demonstrates an investment in this opera's lifespan and potential. Or so it would have done, if the money had been used. By May of 1962, however, the allocated sum line for *Not Love Alone* had been quietly removed and reallocated elsewhere. *Not Love Alone* was moved to a page for 'past spending', with the sum of 500 roubles written next to it.<sup>189</sup> Something had happened between January and May 1962 that cancelled the production.

While no public reviews of the performances were published, as Shchedrin himself has noted,<sup>190</sup> private, internal publications of the Bolshoi Theatre reveal the attitudes of the staff members and artists. Minutes from editorial board meetings of *Sovetskii artist*, the internal newspaper of the Bolshoi Theatre, unearth debates about how to discuss this opera in print. Thanks to the consternation of this body about how to deal with *Not Love Alone*, there is a treasure trove of information regarding how it was received, and what may have flipped the balance in favour of cancellation. *Not Love Alone* is brought up in the very first meeting of the *Sovetskii artist* editors of 1962. On 6 January, barely two weeks after the premiere, the editors argued about how to review the opera. Although many of the editors disliked the opera, they knew they needed to pay it special attention because, 'an opera on a contemporary theme must be honoured with some serious parsing'.<sup>191</sup> Every single one of them would have experienced the pressure of supporting operas on contemporary themes. After publishing one scathing article about *Not Love Alone*, the ranking editors became concerned that they had dismissed

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<sup>188</sup> RGALI, f. 648, o. 11, ed.kh. 359: 72-91.

<sup>189</sup> Ibid, 30-1.

<sup>190</sup> Shchedrin, interview with author, 17 March 2017.

<sup>191</sup> RGALI, F. 648, o. 11, e.kh. 401: 6.

*Not Love Alone* too quickly, which led them to conclude that they ought to be more careful with judgments of Soviet operas.<sup>192</sup>

Since the editors were divided about how to present this opera, however (some abhorred it and refused to endorse it, others were worried about preserving their careers and willing to approve it), they decided to survey the audience during the next performances in order to settle the question of whether or not it was a suitable opera for the Bolshoi.<sup>193</sup> The survey results were preserved and prove to be a bountiful source of insights. But even before analysing the responses, the fact that the survey was taken, and when it was taken, reveals invaluable information. The survey was distributed in March 1962, which creates an alternate timeline for the narrative about this opera: it reveals that it was going to be shown in March of 1962, though it had previously been suggested that the run had ended permanently before 1962 began.<sup>194</sup> Second, if *Sovetskii artist* was bothering with a survey, then the verdict on this opera was still undecided. On 8 March 1962, *Sovetskii artist* surveyed the viewers of *Not Love Alone* in the Bolshoi Theatre.<sup>195</sup> The responses were not published, but 153 were preserved in archives.

The survey, left on each individual seat, included the following text:

Dear Comrades:

The editors of *Sovetskii artist*, the newspaper of the Bolshoi Theatre, kindly ask you to answer the following questions:

- 1 Did you like the opera *Not Love Alone*?
- 2 What attracted your attention or caught your eye in this production?
- 3 What is your opinion of the music, the sets, and the singers?
- 4 Your full name, workplace, and profession.

Please leave the surveys on your chair at the conclusion of the opera.<sup>196</sup>

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<sup>192</sup> Ibid.

<sup>193</sup> On opinions of the editors about the opera: RGALI, f. 648, o. 11, e.kh. 401: 5. On the survey: f. 648, o. 11, e.kh. 401: 22.

<sup>194</sup> Abassova, 'Not Love Alone', Mariinsky.ru.

<sup>195</sup> There are no dates on the surveys themselves, but many of the respondents mentioned that they were lucky to be at the theatre on International Women's Day. This confirms my suspicion that this performance took place on 8 March 1962.

<sup>196</sup> See RGALI, f. 648, o. 11, ed.kh. 401a, 401.

Responses varied from detailed and erudite, to sparse and vague, to practically unintelligible due to poor spelling, grammar, or handwriting. The request for the name and workplace to be noted down, however, is both a drawback and a boon: on the one hand, since the surveys are not anonymous, it must be assumed that some self-censorship would have taken place. On the other hand, there is the great benefit that it is possible to identify the social status of the audience members. A wide cross-section of Soviet society visited the Bolshoi Theatre – from engineers, to factory workers, to students, to a curator from the Tretyakov Gallery, and even a British diplomat who expressed his enthusiastic approval in broken Russian. While there are not enough data to control for demographic factors in approval of the opera, other trends emerge.

First, the music was a clear stroke in favour of the opera for the audience. Of nearly 153 responses, every single one that was longer than a sentence praised the music. Of those who wrote that they disliked the opera, on the other hand, the overwhelming majority (more than 90%) disliked it because they thought it was not suitable in subject for the Bolshoi Theatre, because they had hoped to be diverted by something grand. Many expressed disappointment that they had come all the way to Moscow, in one woman's case, from Armenia, with a dream to see a Verdi or a Tchaikovsky opera, and instead had to watch scenes 'that I see every day at home'.<sup>197</sup> Some admitted to liking the music of the opera, but viscerally reacted to seeing familiar situations from quotidian life on the stage of the Soviet Union's most famous theatre. It was these audience members who validated the fears of the likes of Krieger and Leontovskaia – that it is not desirable to show Soviet life as it really is.

Of the surveys that remain in the archives, almost half of the responses were positive, which is a surprise given how it was spoken about by the editors. Several surveys mentioned that this was the first opera they had seen that addressed the feelings of the working class,

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<sup>197</sup> RGALI, f. 648, o. 11, e.kh. 401a: 33.

instead of seeing them merely as a source of production (this opinion validated Ryndin's point), and were glad of this. Half a dozen women mentioned that it was an honour to see an opera that portrayed such a strong and complex female leader on International Women's Day. Still others raved about seeing an opera that was 'accessible' and 'understandable', and about 'people like us' instead of something aloof.<sup>198</sup> Many responses praised the singers – whether or not they liked the opera – especially Klepatskaia, who played Varvara on that evening.<sup>199</sup>

Overall, the responses of the audience mirrored the divided reactions of the editorial board of *Sovetskii artist*. Some appreciated the tragic realism, while others were offended that they were forced to watch a modern opera at all. Not one response, however, echoed the concerns of Leontovskaia or Krieger, that there were not enough good communists, or enough of the labour process shown on stage. In a meeting of *Sovetskii artist* on 19 March 1962, a discussion took place about what to do with these responses. When first discussing the results of the survey, Pylkova, the representative who was almost always the one to raise the issue of *Not Love Alone* in meetings, suggested that they add statistics from the surveys – how many were in favour of the opera, and how many against. Hammering in her agenda, she added, 'the negative reviews prevailed.'<sup>200</sup> Statistics were not gathered at that time, however, and though negative reviews may have prevailed, according to the reviews that remain, it seems unlikely that they prevailed by much. But the survey had been delivered with an agenda in mind, and a specific outcome was expected. As one of the most critical *Sovetskii artist* editors wrote about taking the survey, 'This is the right thing to do. Let the theatre know what the audience is saying about it, after all, it's not a secret that many people leave after the first or second act!'<sup>201</sup> They had planned to confirm their suspicions that audiences were repulsed by the opera – and they were determined to see the results as they had planned to see them. The results, however, were

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<sup>198</sup> RGALI, f. 648, o. 11, e.kh. 401a.

<sup>199</sup> Ibid.

<sup>200</sup> RGALI, f. 648, o. 11, ed.kh. 401: 34.

<sup>201</sup> Ibid, 14.

not as overwhelmingly negative as they were expecting. In fact, Shchedrin's opera received a warmer audience reception than anyone would have guessed given its mysterious dismissal.

While *Not Love Alone* was deemed unacceptable, the subject of the collective farm was still attractive to the authorities, and thus to the theatre. Just two months after *Not Love Alone* was finally cancelled, the Ministry of Culture signed a contract with Katsman for another opera about a collective farm.<sup>202</sup> The opera, entitled *High Water*, was completed and accepted by the Ministry of Culture on 25 September 1962, and the composer paid a handsome fee.<sup>203</sup> The confirmation of the commission's fulfilment was signed by Leontovskaia and Vartanian, two of the staunchest critics in the meeting about *Not Love Alone*. All of their unfulfilled wishes about that opera seemed destined to be recompensed by *High Water*: Leontovskaia had been annoyed that Shchedrin's opera portrayed *kolkhoz* people as only concerned with love and not work,<sup>204</sup> while Krieger had been frustrated that the labour process was not shown,<sup>205</sup> and Vartanian had thought that the opera should not be allowed to be shown.<sup>206</sup> *High Water* addressed all of these concerns: set in a Soviet *kolkhoz* with a mill at its centre, the action revolves around a soldier, Sergei, who returns from the war to his village with his new wife. He is eager to get back to work, but she is unhappy and wants to return to the city to 'live for myself!', she declares.<sup>207</sup> Meanwhile as she is being ungrateful, Sergei rediscovers the sweetheart of his youth, Anfisa, and at first, they seem to exhibit mutual affection.<sup>208</sup> Eventually, Sergei's wife Claudia packs up and leaves, but Anfisa is not about to reunite with Sergei, because it turns out that was not her concern at all. 'Everything Sergei opened my eyes to,' she sings in the final scene, as she gestures around her at the *kolkhoz* 'is far greater than

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<sup>202</sup> RGALI, f. 2329, o. 3, ed.kh. 1217: 34.

<sup>203</sup> Ibid.

<sup>204</sup> RGALI, f. 648, o. 11, ed.kh. 11: 18.

<sup>205</sup> Ibid, 15.

<sup>206</sup> Ibid, 21-3.

<sup>207</sup> RGALI. f. 2329, o. 3, ed.kh. 1217: 20.

<sup>208</sup> Ibid, 22.

love could ever be!’<sup>209</sup> Sergei, likewise, is too busy with work to miss his wife or be tempted by the beautiful Anfisa. In addition to these admirable sentiments, there are several choral numbers that show men at work near the mill, and singing about their labour process, and women at work in the fields and reprimanding one of their comrades for shirking her duty to search for cranberries.<sup>210</sup> It should have been the perfect formula.

### **Conclusion: Legacy and Revival**

*High Water* fitted all of the ideological requirements of Socialist Realism, and yet it did not fare well. It received only four performances before it was cancelled permanently.<sup>211</sup> As I have demonstrated, a multitude of factors could account for a production’s cancellation, so such a fate does not necessarily reflect on the quality of music or dramaturgy, though it is hard to imagine that such wooden characters and such an implausible plot could have been compelling to anyone watching. While *The Fate of Man* fared far better, with 61 performances in 1962 alone, it would not stand the test of time either. In fact, only *Not Love Alone* would live beyond its era: the very elements that condemned *Not Love Alone* in the first place imbued it with new life later, first in the 1970s, and then in the twenty-first century. It is not an opera about Soviet labourers imagined as super-beings, whereas the majority of Soviet operas and ballets were.<sup>212</sup> Rather, it is about people surviving the ordinary dramas of life in the Soviet Union. It is this humanity and accessibility that prompted Boris Pokrovsky, who had participated in that first meeting after the dress rehearsal, to give Shchedrin’s opera one more chance in the Soviet Union, and has prompted two different theatres to produce this opera in Russia in the 2010s. So far, there have been three vastly different revivals of this opera since

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<sup>209</sup> RGALI. f. 2329, o. 3, ed.kh. 1217: 33.

<sup>210</sup> Ibid, 29, 13-5.

<sup>211</sup> RGALI. f. 2329, o. 3, ed.kh. 1212.

<sup>212</sup> Ibid, 26.

its cancelation in April of 1962 – and no revivals of *The Decembrists*, *High Water*, or *The Fate of Man*.

Pokrovsky chose to produce *Not Love Alone* for the debut performance of his new company, the Moscow Chamber Opera Theatre, in 1971. Shchedrin even re-orchestrated the work for eleven instruments for the occasion.<sup>213</sup> Given the opera's history, and Shchedrin's other recent scrape with the Minister of Culture over *Anna Karenina*, Pokrovsky's vote of confidence in the composer, and in the opera, was bold.<sup>214</sup> In explaining his selection of *Not Love Alone*, he skirted around the topic of the opera's dubious premiere. He commented that while he was preparing to open his new opera theatre, 'at the same time appeared a little opera by the then young composer Rodion Shchedrin, *Not Love Alone*, which immediately enchanted everyone with the score, but invariably failed when staged at the Bolshoi'.<sup>215</sup> He strangely skipped over his involvement in the first production, and wrote as if this was his first encounter with the score. It was because of his participation in the first discussions of the opera in 1961, however, that he would have known the opera was cancelled because of politics and not artistic shortcomings. In his words, 'the opera was so enchanting that it was a joy to rehearse, and there was no danger of failing with it – and yet everything failed anyway.'<sup>216</sup> Later in his book *Moia zhizn' - opera (My Life is Opera)*, however, he remarked that the production was an artistic success.<sup>217</sup> This contradiction – noting that it failed but was an artistic success – is as close as Pokrovsky got to hinting that the failure of this opera had nothing to do with its artistic merits. Pokrovsky also provided another insight, however, which sheds light on the inside of Bolshoi policy, and on his understanding of what happened to his production. The process of the development of art, he stated, 'has not been an easy one in the Bolshoi Theatre. This was not

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<sup>213</sup> Votpusk.ru, 'Kamerny Muzykalny Teatr Immeni Pokrovskogo', [https://www.votpusk.ru/country/dostoprим\\_info.asp?ID=8424](https://www.votpusk.ru/country/dostoprим_info.asp?ID=8424). Accessed 14.04.2020.

<sup>214</sup> Plisetskaya, *I, Maya*, 306.

<sup>215</sup> Boris Pokrovsky, *Moia zhizn' – opera* (Moscow: Agraf, 1999), 122.

<sup>216</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>217</sup> *Ibid.*, 123

solely due to the mediocrity of taste among certain members of the audience, but to a well-defined programme dictated by the autocracy, a programme aimed at separating art from the country's stormy development and reducing it to a harmless pleasure unlikely to provoke thought about anything in particular'.<sup>218</sup> Pokrovsky's analysis cuts to the heart of the scandal with *Not Love Alone*: it was too thought-provoking, and exposed too much of 'the country's stormy development.'<sup>219</sup> But Pokrovsky's analysis also suggests a deep problem in the Bolshoi itself: it was simply not equipped – artistically, politically, or administratively – to support new compositions. This left a niche that Pokrovsky promptly capitalised on with his new chamber theatre.

In 2014, Shchedrin's opera was staged again, this time at the St Petersburg Opera, and the production brought great delight to both Shchedrin and Plisetskaya – though both admitted that it was more risqué than they had imagined it could be (the age gap was emphasised rather than minimised in this production).<sup>220</sup> In 2016, *Not Love Alone* made its debut on the stage of the Mariinsky Theatre. This production was the closest to the original that has been seen since 1962. Production designer Aleksander Orlov explained a concept similar to Tyshler's, that he wanted there to be nothing superfluous to distract from the plot: 'in the libretto, there are three birch trees, a few benches, a black floor – indeed, it's muddy, and it rains throughout the opera'.<sup>221</sup> Aleksandr Kuzin, the director, espoused his understanding of the opera, which closely matched Shchedrin's speech at the meeting in 1961. 'This is a story,' he commented, 'not about life on a collective farm – the collective farm is just the setting for the action. We are creating a production about the fate of a woman who, after becoming the head of this farm took responsibility for all of the residents upon her own shoulders, and could allow herself no

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<sup>218</sup> Boris Pokrovsky and Iurii Grigorovich, *The Bolshoi: Opera and Ballet at the Greatest Theater in Russia* (New York: William Morrow & Company, 1979), 27.

<sup>219</sup> Ibid.

<sup>220</sup> Shchedrin, interview with author, 17 March 2017.

<sup>221</sup> Aleksander Orlov, interview printed in Mariinsky Theatre programme for *Not Love Alone*, March 2017.

pleasure.’<sup>222</sup> Kuzin’s vision was to present all of the action taking place at the centre of the village before everyone’s watchful eyes – ironically, the exact opposite of what Leontovskaia had asked for at the meeting in 1961. At the end of the opera, once Varvara has forfeited her passion for Gavrilov, the workers greet her with ‘reverence’ since they are aware of her sacrifice.<sup>223</sup> This recognition provides some catharsis to the end of the opera.

While the director approached this theme with utmost gravitas, however, the costume designer, Irina Cherednikova, grasped the other element of this opera that the Soviets had missed: the humour. She explained, ‘There is a lot in Shchedrin that is ironic, and even sceptical, of the *kolkhoz* system, and much that is entertaining’.<sup>224</sup> Cherednikova suggested that Shchedrin, as an inheritor of the tradition of Shostakovich, decided to write something about real people, not a stylised fairy tale, and so she wanted to honour that in her costumes, which are simple and nearly contemporary to the twenty-first century.<sup>225</sup>

Shchedrin’s opera endured, unlike Katsman’s and unlike Dzerzhinsky’s, because it was not ultimately reliant on Soviet sentiments. It stood on its own merit even if set in contemporary clothes, or moved out of a collective farm. While Shchedrin was clearly not trying to create a dissident work of art, he also risked enough abnormalities in his opera to attempt a work built on real, rather than idealised, emotions. At least at this time, Shchedrin was certainly not ‘the darling of the [Soviet] musical establishment,’<sup>226</sup> as Boris Schwarz has claimed he always was, and perhaps not even a traditionalist, as Schmelz has positioned him.<sup>227</sup> He was, rather, a cautious moderniser, toiling to resuscitate opera from its state of lifelessness imposed by decades of inexpert guidance, only to discover that such freedoms were still not permitted. Frolova-Walker’s description of the predicament of Soviet composers extends well to

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<sup>222</sup> Aleksander Kuzin, interview printed in Mariinsky Theatre programme for *Not Love Alone*, March 2017.

<sup>223</sup> Ibid.

<sup>224</sup> Irina Cherednikova, interview printed in Mariinsky Theatre programme for *Not Love Alone*, March 2017.

<sup>225</sup> Ibid.

<sup>226</sup> Schwarz, *Music and Musical Life*, 296.

<sup>227</sup> Schmelz, *Such Freedom*, 65.

Shchedrin: ‘the question of becoming a Soviet composer or “music worker” was a matter of accepting the inevitable, sometimes with pain and regret, sometimes in an opportunistic quest for power and personal benefit’.<sup>228</sup> After one valiant attempt, Shchedrin accepted that he would not succeed in convincing the authorities that his new style of Soviet opera, which included Soviet themes but realistic people, would ever be allowed on stage. He moved on, did not attempt such an endeavour again, and rather, positioned himself strategically to advance his career. He would not write another opera for nearly fifteen years, and when he did, he would eschew contemporary themes and take refuge in a theme with established legitimacy: Nikolai Gogol’s classic epic poem, *Mertvye dushi* (*Dead Souls*).

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<sup>228</sup> Marina Frolova-Walker, *Music and Soviet Power, 1917-1932* (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2012), xviii.

## Chapter 2

### Opera After Ennui: Shchedrin, Shostakovich, and Resurrected Modernism in the Brezhnev Era

In May 1976, in one of the dimly lit, high-ceilinged rehearsal rooms of the Bolshoi Theatre, a familiar group of singers, conductors, and bureaucrats surrounded a single figure seated at a grand piano. He was about to enact the ritual of playing and singing his entire opera for the judgment of the theatre's Artistic Council, and then awaiting their criticism or blessing afterward. This gathering was a routine occurrence: it represented the process by which esteemed members of the Soviet musical community evaluated the ideological and musical suitability of compositions that might appear on the grandest stage in the nation. On this occasion, the composer, Rodion Shchedrin, waited anxiously, worried his opera could be misconstrued.<sup>1</sup> Before playing he chanced a few words of introduction; he warned the Council that what they were about to hear might not be what they were expecting. He began by hinting that both the form and genre would be unfamiliar. Though based on the epic poem *Mertvye dushi* (*Dead Souls*) by Nikolai Gogol, they should not expect the same narrative; in fact, his opera by the same name would more accurately be called 'operatic scenes', and he added, it was not really meant to be a regular opera at all, but a 'dram-opera'. By this, Shchedrin explained, he meant that he hoped it would be like Homer's *The Iliad*, both 'national' and 'of our people', but gave little other information as to what else he meant by the term.<sup>2</sup> Probably, however, it was meant as an appeal to the precedents of both Piotr Tchaikovsky's *Evgenii*

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<sup>1</sup> Rodion Shchedrin, interview with author, 27 March 2018.

<sup>2</sup> RGALI, f. 648, o. 27, ed.kh. 148: 7.

*Onegin*, which the composer called ‘lyric scenes’, and to the Soviet convention of ‘dram-ballet’.<sup>3</sup> With those bold – if slightly confusing and defensive – claims, he opened his score and proceeded directly into a solo performance of his two-and-a-half hour opera.

The reactions to this ‘long-awaited’ and ‘much anticipated’ opera were staid.<sup>4</sup> The singers recoiled at the difficult ‘modern musical language’, and Irina Arkhipova, a renowned mezzo-soprano who had starred in Shchedrin’s first opera fifteen years earlier, hesitated when asked whether she would sing the premiere; she agreed to consider it, but instructed the composer that some portions would certainly need to be rewritten because they were hardly performable.<sup>5</sup> Conductor Fuat Mansurov proclaimed that although Shchedrin was surely a genius, since this opera was ‘an unusual genre, an unusual form’, he would need to withhold judgment until the first rehearsal.<sup>6</sup> Finally, *Dead Souls* was rescued by some unlikely comparisons: one committee member commented that this would certainly not be the first time they had engaged a difficult piece for the stage – after all, only two years prior the Bolshoi had produced Sergei Prokofiev’s *Igrok (The Gambler)*. One of the Bolshoi’s esteemed staff stage directors, Boris Pokrovsky, chimed in that in recent years the troupe had been expanding its repertoire in more adventurous ways, not just with Prokofiev, but also with Benjamin Britten. And after all, scoffed another: *Ledi Makbet Mtsenskogo uezda (Lady Macbeth of the Mtsensk District)* was first dismissed from the Bolshoi for precisely the same criticism, that it was too difficult (granted, this gentleman was offering a rather reductionist version of the story).<sup>7</sup> The two camps, therefore, were not so much divided on the merit of the opera as on the merit of ‘modern musical language’ altogether.

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<sup>3</sup> See Christina Ezrahi, *Swans of the Kremlin: Ballet and Power in Soviet Russia* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2012), 47, 130.

<sup>4</sup> RGALI, f. 648, o. 27, ed.kh. 148: 9.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid, 11-2.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid, 30.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid, 29-36.

This odd conversation highlights the tensions of operatic culture in the 1970s, and Shchedrin's place in it: while the earlier operas of Prokofiev and Shostakovich were being gradually rehabilitated, most Soviet composers were still writing propaganda operas, and artistic authorities – and the artists themselves – were cautious of anything 'too' modern. I will argue that *Dead Souls* holds a unique place in Soviet operatic history. Of all of the premieres at the Bolshoi Theatre in this decade, it was the only piece written as a serious attempt at a full-length opera that had nothing to do with a contemporary Soviet theme, propaganda, or the popular musical language expected of the propaganda opera.<sup>8</sup> Comparing both Shostakovich's *Nos (The Nose)* and *Dead Souls* to other works of the 1970s, I. Balázs commented, 'both are deeply rooted in the traditions of Russian-Soviet opera, but in ways other than what was considered the norm'.<sup>9</sup> Thus the bewildered reactions from many of the staff members of the theatre. Instead of joining in the Socialist Realist aesthetic of his peers, Shchedrin instead aspired to join the tradition of Russian opera that he perceived as having been interrupted with the ignominious removal of Shostakovich's *Lady Macbeth* from the stage.

At first glance, the musical material of the 1970s seems to demonstrate a reaction to the Stalin years: non-inventive, sluggish, and a reflection of what would become known as *zastoi* – the Stagnation. I will argue that Stagnation is too sweeping a label for all music in this period; and yet, in opera, there did seem to be an artistic ennui, a weariness from the hackneyed Soviet forms that still pervaded this period (as I will demonstrate with three of the four operas produced at the Bolshoi in this decade). Balázs has observed, for instance, that it is necessary to recognise the 'conservative, academically frozen musical life of the sixties and seventies' in

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<sup>8</sup> As I will expand on later, the only new operas written for the Bolshoi between 1970 and 1980 were *Zori zdes' tikhie (The Dawns are Quiet Here)*, by Kirill Molchanov; *Pokhishchenie luny (The Abduction of the Moon)*, by Otar Taktakishvili; *Dead Souls*, by Rodion Shchedrin; *Optimisticheskaia tragediia (Optimistic Tragedy)*, by Aleksander Kholminov; *Oktiabr' (October)*, a new restored version) by Vano Muradeli; and *Leniniana*, by Aleksandr Lazarev. RGALI, f. 2329, o. 23, ed.kh. 661: 40-1. And f. 648, o. 19, ed.kh 339; f. 648, o. 19, ed.kh. 344: 7-8.

<sup>9</sup> I. Balázs: 'Rodion Sechtschedrin: *Die toten Seelen*: Opernszenen nach Gogol in 3 Aufzügen, 19 Bildern, Aspekte zum Problem der Operndramaturgie', *Melos*, 50 no. 1 (1988): 55–105. 58.

order ‘to understand the position of an operatic work like *Dead Souls* on the stage of the Bolshoi Theatre, indeed even in the intellectual life of the Soviet Union in general.’<sup>10</sup> Similarly, Peter Schmelz has also argued that innovation slowed in this decade: after the fierce ideological battles of the 1950s and 1960s, the authorities finally gave up on writing new guidelines and regulations, and without regulations to fight against, composers lost their drive to ‘explore all of the techniques that had been denied them’, and instead decided to expand in other directions.<sup>11</sup> Though the explicit struggle between authorities and musicians had largely abated, however, there was more to the picture of musical activity in the decade. First, despite the trends of institutional weariness, there are myriad examples of individual creativity – as the birth of *Dead Souls* demonstrates. Indeed, scholars of late socialism have recently been observing that on an individual level, citizens experienced freedom and vitality that had been out of reach in previous decades.<sup>12</sup> Second, however, ‘stagnation’ itself was a pejorative term coined by Mikhail Gorbachev who used it in a speech in 1986 to distance himself from Brezhnev and a failing economy, and to justify launching his own new policies.<sup>13</sup> This view, however, was a historical projection onto the 1970s: though it became widely held both in the Soviet Union and abroad, it does not account for how the 1970s were perceived by people at the time.

Glossing over the 1970s as uneventful has been a mistake, as scholars have begun to insist.<sup>14</sup> This decade was fraught and complex, and the question of how composers sought to

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<sup>10</sup> Balázs, ‘Rodion Schtschedrin’, 56.

<sup>11</sup> Peter Schmelz, *Such Freedom, If Only Musical: Unofficial Soviet Music during the Thaw* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 326-7.

<sup>12</sup> Neringa Klumbytė and Gulnaz Sharafutdinova, *Soviet Society in the Era of Late Socialism, 1964-1985* (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2013), 8, 14.

<sup>13</sup> Dina Fainberg and Artemy M. Kalinovsky, *Reconsidering Stagnation in the Brezhnev Era: Ideology and Exchange* (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2016), xiii-ix.

<sup>14</sup> Fainberg and Kalinovsky, *Reconsidering Stagnation*, vii, xv. See also Eleonory Gilburd, *To See Paris and Die: the Soviet Lives of Western Culture* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2018). *Common Places: Mythologies of Everyday Life in Russia* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1994); Lewis H. Siegelbaum, *Borders of Socialism: Private Spheres of Soviet Russia* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006); David Crowley and Susan Emily Reid, *Socialist Spaces: Sites of Everyday Life in the Eastern Bloc* (Oxford: Bloomsbury

revive musical culture and find inspiration has been largely overlooked. Now that the terror had ceased, but Soviet organisational structures still held power over musical production, what were the viable paths forward for composers? While Schmelz has documented the response of the ‘unofficial’ composers to this situation, the struggle of the ‘official’ and centrist composers to overcome ennui and find inspiration has remained a broadly neglected topic – especially when regarding opera composers.<sup>15</sup>

In this chapter, I use archival material to demonstrate how four distinct streams emerged in composition, and how these streams embody the variety of composers’ responses to the *Zeitgeist* of the 1970s. First, there was a minority of ‘official’ art that continued to be produced and staged – that is, art that attempted to adhere to whatever guidelines were promoted by the state through the Ministry of Culture and Union of Composers (to the extent these guidelines were even intelligible). In the early Brezhnev era, this manifested itself as art that glorified the heroic actions of those involved in the Second World War, such as Kirill Molchanov’s *Zori zdes’ tikhie* (*The Dawns are Quiet Here*), as the narrative about the war became one of the main propagandistic priorities of the Brezhnev government.<sup>16</sup> Second, there were the ‘unofficial’ composers – those who disregarded the explicit or implicit preferences of the state in artistic matters – who tended to avoid staged genres because they were unable to win over the impresarios or government arts officials who were gatekeepers of the major theatres and concert halls (as will be shown, however, they still managed to influence deeply some of the mainstream composers, such as Shchedrin). Third, there was the revival of modernism as found in previously condemned composers: primarily Shostakovich and Prokofiev. Finally, there was

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Publishing, 2018). See also Juliane Fürst, 'Where Did All the Normal People Go?: Another Look at the Soviet 1970s', *Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History* 14, no. 3 (2013): 621–40.

<sup>15</sup> As I explain fully in Chapter 1, ‘official’ in this context refers to composers who received significant financial support from the state (usually via the Composers’ Union), while ‘unofficial’ refers to composers who were marginalised in terms of financial support or publicity. These composers were not threatened physically or intellectually, however, and it would be a mistake to think of this period as a time of risk for artists.

<sup>16</sup> Polly Jones, ‘Between Post-Stalinist Legitimacy and Stalin’s Authority: Memories of 1941 from Late Socialism to the Post-Soviet Era’, *Canadian Slavonic Papers*, 54 no. 3-4 (2012): 357-76. 363.

a fourth way: the attempt to find new operatic language that was not propped up by politically-approved contemporary themes or propaganda, but that reached back to older models for inspiration. As far as I have been able to discern, in opera, only Shchedrin falls into this category.

To understand the position of composers in the 1970s, however, one must consider the backdrop of the 1960s. In Chapter 1, I detailed the artistic response to the so-called Secret Speech of 1956, wherein Nikita Khrushchev publicly acknowledged Stalin's crimes and denounced his memory.<sup>17</sup> From 1956 to 1969, the Ministry of Culture made the development and production of 'operas on contemporary themes' a top priority,<sup>18</sup> and the Soviet Union witnessed an unprecedented explosion in Socialist Realist productions, not only in opera, but also in theatre and ballet as artists sought to strike a balance between experimentation and walking Party lines.<sup>19</sup> Even film studios made a concerted effort to follow suit with music, ensuring that the soundtracks were Soviet in style and included plenty of accessible folk themes.<sup>20</sup> Shchedrin and other young composers were pressured to meet nebulous standards of patriotism and novelty (but not *too* much novelty, and only the right kind of patriotism), set by bureaucrats, which had never been perfectly exemplified before. This proved to be impossible. Even Shchedrin's folk opera *Ne tol'ko liubov* (*Not Love Alone*), with its promising blend of Soviet themes about collective farming, human tragedy, and accessible melodies, was deemed ideologically problematic because it did not portray people in the farm as happy enough.<sup>21</sup> By the late 1960s, after the failure of Shchedrin's opera and all of the others immediately commissioned in its wake (including Klara Katsman's *Polovod'e* [*High Water*]), the

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<sup>17</sup> I discuss this with archival material in Chapter 1.

<sup>18</sup> Joseph Borome, 'The Bolshoi Theater and Opera', *Russian Review* 24, no. 1 (1965): 52-64. 60.

<sup>19</sup> Nicholas Rzhevsky, 'Literature in the Soviet theater: 1960-1980', *Text and Performance Quarterly* (1984): 13-19. 14.

<sup>20</sup> Tatiana K. Egorova, *Soviet Film Music: An Historical Survey* (Amsterdam: Harwood Academic Publishers, 1997), 133.

<sup>21</sup> See Chapter 1 of this thesis.

administration of the Bolshoi was desperate to find something suitably Soviet to produce. They started casting about for even any older Soviet-themed operas, and finally settled on Prokofiev's *Semyon Kotko*, a bit outdated, but at the very least, unquestionably *Soviet*. Then artistic director of the Bolshoi Theatre, Mikhail Chulaki, had his reservations about *Semen Kotko*, since he had been warned that though the music was charming, it had flopped after being staged at theatres in both Leningrad and Tbilisi. Even with this warning in mind, he eventually conceded that:

an about face toward Prokofiev could be justified. It has beautiful music and expressive vocal lines, which are both in the tradition of our theatre, and the theme is at least contemporary: it's about the birth of the Soviet person and the fight for Soviet power. And it's the only Prokofiev opera on a contemporary theme.<sup>22</sup>

And so, Prokofiev began to come to the rescue of 'contemporary' opera.

Concern in the Ministry of Culture about the scarcity of contemporary-themed opera continued into the early 1970s, demonstrated by Artistic Council meetings that resound with the failings of young composers and the disappointing progression of Soviet music. In 1973, the new director of the Bolshoi, Molchanov, lamented that there were no good Soviet operas being written: the great composers, like Tikhon Khrennikov and Dmitry Kabalevsky, were avoiding the genre, and the young composers were turning their attention to the distant past and other 'unsuitable' themes.<sup>23</sup> He continued, 'in recent years – and they've also discussed this in the Union of Composers more than once – the intensity of the work of Soviet composers has diminished, and although no fewer operas are being produced than before, brilliant compositions are fewer and further between.'<sup>24</sup> If any more evidence was needed that the project of the 1960s had failed to produce new glory for Soviet opera, it could be noted that

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<sup>22</sup> RGALI, f. 648, o. 12, ed.kh. 12: 15.

<sup>23</sup> RGALI, f. 648, o. 27, ed.kh. 72: 16-7.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*

not a single opera written for the Bolshoi Theatre during the 1960s still held a place in the repertoire in the 1970s.<sup>25</sup>

By the mid-1970s the torrent of rhetoric about Soviet operas had ebbed to a trickle. Since the Ministry of Culture had still been unable to persuade top composers to write new Soviet operas, they effectively surrendered: while they occasionally continued to fret over the fact that the circle of composers writing for the Bolshoi Theatre was too small and the quality of opera created was not high enough, the polemical speeches ceased, as did the attempts to adjust financial incentive structures to bait composers.<sup>26</sup> While there is a significant paper trail of the internal debate in the Ministry of Culture throughout the 1960s about how to raise fees to attract the best composers to write Soviet operas, by the 1970s, these discussions disappear from the records.<sup>27</sup> By the 1973-1974 season at the Bolshoi Theatre, only 22% of opera titles shown (six out of twenty-seven) were by Soviet composers, and only one of those was on a contemporary theme,<sup>28</sup> a substantial decrease from 54% of operas by Soviet composers in 1959.<sup>29</sup>

The course that Khrushchev and Furtseva had imagined charting to create a new operatic style after Stalin's death had failed. Instead, a new concern surfaced: the diminishing quality and number of performances of the classics of Russian opera. Starting in the early 1970s, the term '*Zolotoi fond*' ('golden vault') of Russian opera appeared with startling frequency in Ministry of Culture meeting transcripts and repertoire planning documents. From 1974-1978,

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<sup>25</sup> The exception to this could arguably be Vano Muradeli's *October*, which stays in the repertoire during this period, but with significant edits. Written for the Bol'shoi in 1963, in its original form it was more play than opera, and was removed from the repertoire briefly, then drastically rewritten for a new premiere in 1977, so I would argue this does not count as continuous performance of a title. RGALI, f. 2329, o. 23, ed.kh. 661: 40-1.

<sup>26</sup> RGALI, f. 2329 o. 23, ed.kh. 371: 68.

<sup>27</sup> RGALI, f. 2329, op 23, ed.kh. 870: 1-2.

<sup>28</sup> RGALI, f. 648, o. 19, ed.kh 327: 1. The six operas by Soviet composers in the repertoire that season were Prokofiev's *War and Peace*, *Semyon Kotko*, and *The Gambler* (a premiere that season), Molchanov's *Neizvestny soldat* (*The Unknown Soldier* – the closest one to a contemporary theme), Mikhail Raukhverger's *Snezhnaia Koroleva* (*The Snow Queen*, an 'opera-ballet), and Kholminov's *An Optimistic Tragedy*. None of these were world premieres. The only other new productions that season were of Tchaikovsky's *Iolanta* and Sergei Rakhmaninov's *Fraccesca da Rimini*. See also RGALI, f. 2329, o. 23, ed.kh. 661: 40-1.

<sup>29</sup> RGALI, f. 2329, o. 3, ed.kh. 876: 1.

the declining quality and performance frequency of classical repertoire was raised in meetings as an increasingly urgent necessity for the major theatres to address, both in Moscow and in the provinces.<sup>30</sup> By 1975, evidence of the shifting tide can be seen in the lists of radio broadcasts of Bolshoi productions, which included a few Soviet titles such as Prokofiev's *Voina i mir (War and Peace)*, and Aleksandr Kholminov's *Optimisticheskaia tragediia (An Optimistic Tragedy)*, composed 1967), but had started to prioritise classics such as *Boris Godunov*, *Evgenii Onegin*, *Skazka o Tsare-saltane (The Tale of Tsar Saltan)*, *Kniaz' Igor (Prince Igor)*, *Ruslan i Liudmila*, and *Rusalka*.<sup>31</sup> Even in ballet there was a new focus on the classics, as exemplified by the much vaunted revival of Marius Petipa's *Spiashchaia krasavitsa (Sleeping Beauty)* by Iurii Grigorovich in 1973.<sup>32</sup> Though still commissioning new Soviet pieces, another 1976 Ministry of Culture report stressed that the highest priority was remedying the problem that the 'golden vault' was still not shown frequently enough.<sup>33</sup> By 1978, the repertoire report by the Bolshoi Theatre to the Ministry of Culture registered an even deeper concern, noting that in 1977, operas such as *Sad'ko*, *Khovanshchina*, *Iolanta*, *War and Peace*, and *The Gambler* were barely shown at all, in part because of the resources taken up by the two new Soviet compositions: Shchedrin's *Dead Souls* and Otar Taktakishvili's *Pokhishcheniia luny (Abduction of the Moon)*, premiered 1977).<sup>34</sup> This may be the first recorded concern that there was too much Soviet opera, and that it was compromising something potentially even more important.

One might wonder which operas were crowding out the classics. Between 1970 and 1980, only four original operas were accepted by the Bolshoi Theatre: *The Dawns are Quiet Here* by Molchanov (premiered 1975); *The Abduction of the Moon* by Taktakishvili (premiered

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<sup>30</sup> See, for example, reports from theatres across the USSR as requested by the Ministry of Culture and collected in RGALI, f. 2329, o. 22, ed.kh. 1714.

<sup>31</sup> RGALI, f. 2329 o. 23, ed.kh. 371: 44.

<sup>32</sup> RGALI, f. 2329, o. 22, ed.kh. 1637: 6.

<sup>33</sup> RGALI, f. 2329 o. 23, ed.kh. 510: 30.

<sup>34</sup> RGALI, f. 2329 o. 23, ed.kh. 788: 27.

1977); *Dead Souls* by Shchedrin (premiered 1977); and *Leniniana* by Aleksander Lazarev (premiered 1978).<sup>35</sup> Three of these were in simple, melodic language and focused on exalting Soviet history. Only one of these attempted to artistically escape these confines. In addition to these contemporary compositions, however, another trend took shape which supplemented the repertoire of the Bolshoi: the rediscovery of a certain brand of previously banned modernism which had originated in Russia in the 1920s. Artists and presenters tried to rejuvenate the stagnation of the long 1970s by living vicariously through the short but ravenously creative decade of fifty years past. Though William Quillen has argued that interest in Russian modernist music sparked during Glasnost, the seeds of this recovery in fact germinated with the premiere of Shostakovich's *Katerina Izmailova* at the Stanislavskii Theatre in 1963, and began to blossom in the early 1970s.<sup>36</sup> By 1974, Russian operas and ballets of the 1920s were crowding the stages of Moscow's and St Petersburg's theatres: Shostakovich's more experimental opera, *The Nose*, was premiered at the Moscow Chamber Opera, and simultaneously, a full recovery of Prokofiev's ballets and operas at the Bolshoi was underway, including his early experimental work, *The Gambler*, which was premiered in the same year. By the end of the decade, Shostakovich and Prokofiev both occupied significant positions in the repertoire of the Bolshoi. The Bolshoi Theatre of the 1970s, therefore, consisted primarily of three kinds of operas, and one exception: the 'golden vault', new operas which were exclusively based on contemporary, Soviet themes, and the rehabilitated operas of the 1920s. The exception was Shchedrin's *Dead Souls*, which fits none of these categories precisely, but aesthetically and philosophically is most akin to the latter.

## 1974 – The Year that Shaped a Decade

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<sup>35</sup> RGALI, f. 2329, o. 23, ed.kh. 661: 40-1; also f. 648, o. 19, ed.kh 339: 1; also f. 648, o. 19, ed.kh. 344: 7-8.

<sup>36</sup> William Quillen, 'The Idea of the 1920s in Russian Music Today', in *Russian Music since 1917: Reappraisal and Rediscovery* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018): 376-95. Esp. 377-9.

The sluggishness and stagnation for which the Soviet 1970s are infamous were not immediately apparent at the start of the decade. In fact, the horizon at the dawn of the Brezhnev era glimmered with hope: in general, more goods had become available, and life began to feel more stable. A cassette player, considered a luxury in the 1960s, was already deemed an essential possession by the 1970s,<sup>37</sup> and even previously unimaginable treasures, such as cars, were now tantalisingly available for private ownership.<sup>38</sup> Gradually, however, even though more goods were – in theory – available, daily life became more taxing as the economy slowed and purchasing power diminished. Though one of the primary priorities of the Brezhnev government was improving the welfare of the citizenry, admirable intentions could not spur a lack-lustre economy to action. By the mid-1970s, GDP per capita had significantly decreased and, in addition, nearly all goods except for bread and potatoes were in short supply.<sup>39</sup> A pall of pessimism clouded the ranks of the middle and managerial classes, and forgotten were the fleeting rays of optimism of the mid-1960s.<sup>40</sup>

Because of when the inflection point occurred, it is more useful to divide the new phase of Soviet economic life starting in the mid-1970s rather than at the beginning of the decade; this is also true of artistic life. The early 1970s belong to the hopeful transition into the Brezhnev era, while already by 1973-1974, the tides had turned. A single year, 1974, was the most formative in establishing the new paradigms of musical life for the years to come in the late Soviet period, and also in influencing Shchedrin as he drafted *Dead Souls*. Though *Dead Souls* premiered in 1977, the majority of drafts and material relating to the opera that exist in the archives date from 1973-1975 – falling right in the middle of this eventful period. Three

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<sup>37</sup> Anna Ivanova, 'Socialist Consumption and Brezhnev's Stagnation: A Reappraisal of Late Communist Everyday Life', *Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History* 17, no. 3 (2016): 665–78. 673. See also Lewis H. Siegelbaum, *Cars for Comrades: The Life of the Soviet Automobile* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2011), 6-7 and 238-9.

<sup>38</sup> Philip Hanson, *The Rise and Fall of the Soviet Economy: An Economic History of the USSR 1945-1991* (London: Routledge, 2003), 98.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid*, 131.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid*, 129.

key events defined 1974: the remnant of ‘official’ music as witnessed in Molchanov’s *The Dawns are Quiet Here*; the persistence of – and the pivot of – the avant-garde as seen in Schnittke’s first symphony; and the advent of revived modernism as seen in the premieres of Shostakovich’s *The Nose* and Prokofiev’s *The Gambler*. A few other tangential events were also influential for Shchedrin, if not for other composers, in this year. First, his diaries reveal that he saw Igor Stravinsky’s *Mavra* at the Stanislavskii Theatre on 8 February 1974, and from this time onward mentions of this composer scatter his scores.<sup>41</sup> Second, La Scala came on tour to the Bolshoi Theatre in May of 1974, bringing classics of the Italian repertoire, including Gioachino Rossini’s *Cenerentola (Cinderella)*, which changed the course of Shchedrin’s writing – from May 1974 onward, *Cinderella* becomes a constant reference point in drafts of *Dead Souls*.<sup>42</sup>

### **The official: Kirill Molchanov**

Composer, chairman of the Union of Composers of the USSR from 1951-1956, and director of the Bolshoi Theatre from 1973-1975, Molchanov occupied a respected position in the Soviet musical establishment. In the middle of his tenure in 1974, he and the other members of the Artistic Council of the Bolshoi Theatre were faced with an embarrassing, albeit predictable, problem: 1975 would mark the thirtieth anniversary celebration of the end of the Second World War, but despite a plea to Soviet composers to write something for the occasion, few suitable candidates arose. In an internal meeting at the Bolshoi Theatre, Molchanov complained that the search for contemporary operas had been lamentably simple, because the field had been so weak.<sup>43</sup> There only seemed to be one plausible option, which was the work that Taktakishvili had started on *The Abduction of the Moon*; but some members complained

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<sup>41</sup> RGALI, f. 3267, o. 1, ed.kh. 276: 57.

<sup>42</sup> RGALI, f. 2329, o. 22, ed.kh. 1716: 20.

<sup>43</sup> RGALI, f. 648, o. 27, ed.kh. 96: 40.

that though the music sounded promising, the whole thing was too Georgian, and as it was set in the 1930s, not contemporary enough.<sup>44</sup> At a later meeting with the Ministry of Culture, however, Furtseva was adamant that this momentous occasion should be celebrated by a *Soviet* opera – not a Russian or a Western one – and so Molchanov was obligated to find a solution.<sup>45</sup> Out of ideas, the Artistic Council of the Bolshoi reluctantly returned to *The Abduction of the Moon*; they agreed that though too Georgian, it seemed the best of poor options: at least they found cause to praise the work for its grandiose aspirations and glorification of the Soviet cause, as well as its sweeping musical material. But even with this candidate there were two major obstacles. First, the Russian translation from the original Georgian was not yet ready, and second, in 1975 the troupe was going on tour to the United States, which would involve over 500 artists. The company would be severely limited in time and resources in the upcoming season, and *Abduction* simply required too much work before the tour. As a solution, Molchanov (conveniently) suggested his own *The Dawns are Quiet Here* since it barely required a choir and was artistically much simpler to design than *Abduction* would have been.<sup>46</sup> Molchanov's opera, therefore, became the fulcrum of this anniversary celebration, and Taktakishvili's was postponed until 1977.<sup>47</sup>

Molchanov not only rose to the challenge of writing an opera on a contemporary theme, but also engaged in one of the political priorities of the Brezhnev government. The beginning of the Brezhnev era witnessed frenzied arguments about how to represent the events of the Second World War in public life – whether as a series of heroic events or a national trauma.<sup>48</sup> The result of the arguments was an official line which glorified the victory of the war while trying to minimise the horror of the events.<sup>49</sup> Molchanov's opera directly represents this

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<sup>44</sup> Ibid, 65.

<sup>45</sup> RGALI, f. 2329 o. 22, ed.kh. 1708: 14.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid, 3.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid.

<sup>48</sup> Jones, 'Between Post-Stalinist', 362.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid, 370.

mandated view. The plot follows four female anti-aircraft gunners who sacrifice themselves to kill sixteen German paratroopers who land close to the front; it focuses on their adoration of the motherland and their eagerness to save Russia, rather than on their gruesome deaths. Choosing this text was also strategic: based on a 1969 novel by Boris Vasiliev, which sold 1.8 million copies in the first year of publication, and followed by a blockbuster film by Stanislav Rostotskii, Molchanov could be sure both of official approval, and of name recognition that might draw fans of the novel and film into the theatre.<sup>50</sup>

Molchanov adapted much of his own music from the version he wrote a year earlier for the film, and so it is perhaps no surprise that the pacing is quick, and the addition of spoken dialogue between tuneful solo numbers makes the opera seem more like a musical than a tragic opera. The music of the opera is bombastic, straightforward in construction, and so densely laden with references to other idioms – from folk to popular music – that at times it ceases to be opera and transforms into these other genres. Molchanov packed the opera with the most accessible tunes and palatable accompaniment, and by so doing prioritised intelligibility of message rather than artful construction. Perhaps the only reason it is called an opera at all is that it was staged in the Bolshoi Theatre, which means that by definition, according to the Artistic Council, it could not be a musical.

While the members of the Bolshoi Theatre Artistic Council realised this opera filled a necessary gap in the repertoire if they were to retain their favour and funding from the government, its dramaturgical and musical weaknesses were not lost on these people, who were still, at the end of the day, world-class artists. At an internal evaluation session held after the final dress rehearsal of *The Dawns are Quiet Here*, the subtle criticism was detectable. While conductor Iurii Simonov praised the work for its theatricality, ‘in the best sense of the word’,

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<sup>50</sup> ‘Military Theatre Set to Drama’, *Vietnam News*, October 2016. Permanent URL: <https://vietnamnews.vn/life-style/283345/military-theatre-set-to-stage-russian-drama.html#Yy1clvcMxi2qmHQY.97>

he also carefully noted some serious problems with the orchestration, and others pointed out that the arc of the action did not build tension well.<sup>51</sup> The comments were cautious and diplomatic, as they were dealing with a composition that would undoubtedly be premiered regardless of what they said (and in addition, with a composition written by the director of the theatre). The majority of the serious comments, therefore, were also shrouded in more trivial ones, such as the insistence of one member that ‘the girls should interact with the rifles as if they’re actually rifles!’, not toys, that is.<sup>52</sup> Or Elena Obraztsova’s one contribution, that the heroine really looked terrible in that white shirt.<sup>53</sup> Overall, despite the problems, the bottom line was that this opera would be a useful tool in educating the youth, and that it included music that was ‘melodic, accessible...and really depicts the era of the Great Patriotic War.’<sup>54</sup>

Despite the weaknesses in construction, the opera was reportedly well-received by the premiere audiences in Moscow.<sup>55</sup> The US premiere just a few months after the Soviet one, however, received a very different reaction. One reviewer stated that *The Dawns are Quiet Here* ‘... is one of those works of patriotic poster art that evidently fulfil some deep need in Soviet society but are difficult for many outsiders to take seriously.’<sup>56</sup> Another called it ‘beneath contempt... cheap, sentimental cynical Soviet art at its worst’; and in another instance, ‘patriotic and just plain awful.’<sup>57</sup> Writing in reaction to the US premiere, and to these reviews, Richard Taruskin was more equivocal. He claimed that while no one was surprised by the monolithic plot, American audiences were baffled by ‘the degraded estate allotted music in the

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<sup>51</sup> RGALI, f. 648, o. 27, ed.kh. 118: 4, 10.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid, 11.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid, 7.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid, 8.

<sup>55</sup> See Robert Jacobson, ‘Guest View: A Triumph of Tears at the Bolshoi’, *The New York Times*, 04.05.1975; ‘New Soviet Opera Dramatizes War: “The Dawns are Quiet Here” Recalls Nazi Attacks’, *The New York Times*, 15.04.1975.

<sup>56</sup> Donal Henahan, ‘The Opera “Dawns Are Quiet” has Cast Changes’, *The New York Times*, 16.07.1975.

<sup>57</sup> Harold C. Schonberg, ‘Music View: How “War and Peace” Became the Life of the Party’, *The New York Times*, 27.07.1975; Harold. C. Schonberg, ‘Socialist Realism Comes to the Met Stage’, *The New York Times*, 14.05.1975.

composer's scheme'.<sup>58</sup> Taruskin also excoriated the opera for focusing entirely on the 'what' at the expense of the 'how'.<sup>59</sup> He argued that given the dramaturgical and musical weaknesses, the biggest shock was the fact that this could be taken seriously in the Soviet Union.<sup>60</sup> As just demonstrated, however, the reasons for the place of prominence of this opera were multifaceted, and as Taruskin himself acknowledge, there were many poignant references in the opera that held significance for Soviet audiences: the familiar melodies, the characters who looked and dressed as the audience members themselves had so recently, and the freshness of the devastation of war.<sup>61</sup> With a bit of imagination, it is not difficult to believe that, though simplistic, such a work could have been received as cathartic for Soviet viewers who had just lived through a traumatic war that devastated the home front to a degree unfathomable to Americans. And if not cathartic, it was at least simply what was expected: it played along with all of the rules of portraying the war to which citizens had become accustomed under Brezhnev. In the words of Taruskin's conclusion, 'they just don't see the work the way we do, that's all.'<sup>62</sup>

### **The rebel: Alfred Schnittke**

If Molchanov was on one end of the spectrum, Schnittke was on the other. By the late 1960s, Schnittke was already leading the charge of avant-garde music in the Soviet Union, and had experimented with dodecaphony and with many variations of tonality and atonality. As he was too unorthodox to garner any official commissions for his academic music, however, it was in the film studio where he experimented most freely and earned his livelihood.<sup>63</sup> He tried his hand at extended techniques, unusual instrumentation, and what he would dub in 1968 as

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<sup>58</sup> Richard Taruskin, 'Molchanov's *The Dawns Are Quiet Here*', *Musical Quarterly* 62, no. 1 (1976): 105-15. 110.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, 111.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*, 108.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*, 114.

<sup>63</sup> Schmelz, *Such Freedom*, 305.

‘polystylism’.<sup>64</sup> A stunning example of his early film music is his soundtrack for the 1968 animated film *Stekliannaia garmonika (The Glass Harmonica)*. Schnittke’s first step was to expand the standard orchestra. In addition to a full roster of expected instruments, Schnittke included three saxophones, a Theremin, two electric keyboards, an electric guitar, an accordion, and bongo drums. The magical instrument of the glass harmonica itself is represented by the celeste and the electric accordion.<sup>65</sup> He also added techniques which he likely discovered while improvising in the film studio: on the piano, he explained that the fingers of one hand should mute the strings while the other hand is playing.<sup>66</sup> In another moment, wind players are instructed to blow vigorously in rhythm without pitches.<sup>67</sup> While these sorts of techniques may have already been passé in the West, they were not commonly seen or accepted in official Soviet Union circles, as the lists of concert programmes for the internal concerts of the Union of Composers would confirm.<sup>68</sup> It was only in film as a sound effect that these noises slipped under the radar of official suspicion.

The adventurous spirit Schnittke demonstrated in film he extended to realms beyond the screen. In 1971, he gave a public lecture at a UNESCO conference entitled, ‘Polystylistic Tendencies in Modern Music’, and argued for the merits of polystylism as a tool to break the chains of the ‘crisis of neo-academicism of the 1950s’, and its ‘obsession with serialism’.<sup>69</sup> The lecture was a self-fulfilling prophecy: it would be Schnittke’s own first symphony which established a working form of polystylism. He had argued that for a work to be truly polystylistic, there must be a degree of incongruity, a sense that the pairing is not appropriate,

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<sup>64</sup> For more on Schnittke’s use and understanding of the term ‘polystylism’, see Peter Schmelz, *Sonic Overload: Alfred Schnittke, Valentin Silvestrov, and Polystylism in the Late USSR* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2021), esp. 47-68.

<sup>65</sup> Alfred Schnittke, *The Glass Harmonica: Music to the Film* (Hamburg: Sikorski Musikverlage, 2011), 2.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid*, 12.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid*, 48.

<sup>68</sup> RGALI, f. 3267, o. 3, ed.kh. 180: 1-110.

<sup>69</sup> Schmelz, *Such Freedom*, 303.

which is exactly what he did.<sup>70</sup> In Symphony No. 1, he wove rapidly alternating musical styles together, shifting from atonal and aleatory at one moment, to directly quoting Joseph Haydn in the next. The strands are distinctive and make the listener feel as if the sections could come from entirely different compositions and different genres – a trick that would influence Shchedrin’s compositions of this period. He also blended his newly minted techniques of extended orchestration and unusual textures that he had developed as a film composer with the academic techniques that had so fascinated him outside the studio. He featured instruments that bore evocative connotations at key moments in order to shift the semiotic referents to other times and places: examples include the saxophone during the jazz interlude, or the harpsichord during the quotations of Haydn.<sup>71</sup> Philosophically, Schnittke marked this composition as the turning point when he started thinking more about what to say, and less about how to say it. He consciously labelled the symphony as a commentary on contemporary society: ‘It may be said – with a certain grain of salt, to be sure – that the First Symphony represents a response to a great deal, a response to the time in which it was written.’<sup>72</sup> The ‘how’ for Schnittke became much more inventive as he thought more intently about the ‘what’.

When it came time to premiere the work in 1974, Schnittke’s norm-defying symphony was not welcomed by Communist Party authorities, and initially not a single ensemble would agree to perform it. In the struggle to find an orchestra to programme the work, Schnittke called on Shchedrin for help. Shchedrin had been promoted to the Chair of the Union of Composers of the RSFSR in 1973, and a year later, when plans to premiere Schnittke’s symphony with the Gorky Philharmonic were cut short by the local Party director, who feared repercussions from Moscow, he was able to intervene. Shchedrin wrote a letter to assuage the authorities asserting

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<sup>70</sup> Ivana Medic, *From Polystylism to Meta-Pluralism: Essays on Late Soviet Symphonic Music* (Belgrade: Institute of Musicology, 2017), 83.

<sup>71</sup> See more on Symphony No. 1 in Schmelz, *Sonic Overload*, 146-53.

<sup>72</sup> Schmelz, *Such Freedom*, 307.

that it was a ‘remarkable composition’ and that it was worth a performance.<sup>73</sup> Apparently the Central Committee of the Communist Party was so incredulous of Shchedrin’s support that they demanded the original of the letter be brought to Moscow from Gorky by courier so that they could verify his alleged endorsement.<sup>74</sup> In crafting his defence of the composition, Shchedrin pored over the score and became intimately familiar with Schnittke’s monumental composition and the philosophy behind it.<sup>75</sup> It is perhaps no surprise, therefore, that the ghost of Schnittke’s first symphony haunts Shchedrin’s compositions of the late 1970s, and particularly, *Dead Souls*.

### **The modernists: Dmitry Shostakovich and Sergei Prokofiev**

Two other events in 1974 shaped Shchedrin’s composition of *Dead Souls*: the revival of Shostakovich’s opera *The Nose*, and the Russian premiere of Prokofiev’s *The Gambler*. Completed in the summer of 1928, *The Nose* was Shostakovich’s first truly modernist experiment. I will not seek to define modernism once and for all, but rather to trace the influences in the 1920s that would have informed especially Shostakovich’s and Prokofiev’s conceptions of modernism and their own compositional practices. They were referring to – and I am referring to – the modernism of the particular time and place, Europe of the early twentieth century, and the type of modernism espoused by a certain set of composers who all managed to visit Leningrad in the 1920s. The ethos of this first wave of modernist opera is well encompassed by Herbert Lindenberger, who notes the key indicators of ‘shock, fragmentation, difficulty, disruption, irony, anti-realism, among many others’, which ‘are as applicable to

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<sup>73</sup> Ibid. 304.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid.

<sup>75</sup> Rodion Shchedrin interview with author, 27 March 2018.

modernist opera as to any of the arts.’<sup>76</sup> And in addition, suggests that modernist opera ‘displays a historical consciousness rarely to be found in earlier opera’.<sup>77</sup>

*The Nose* is just this type of opera, and it was a work which was encouraged by the gust of experimental ideas breathing new life into Russian art. Shostakovich was living in Leningrad, which in the 1920s could easily be called the home of the avant-garde because of the flurry of artistic activity it boasted. Although no longer the capital of the Soviet Union, it was unquestionably the cultural capital, and standards at theatres like the Mariinsky had never been so high, nor had the theatres ever been so eager for new works.<sup>78</sup> Equally, radical art became possible because of the political climate. After the Revolution of 1917, opera, the most bourgeois of art forms, managed to survive as a hub of cultural life because in the early days, neither Vladimir Lenin nor Anatoly Lunacharskii, acting Minister of Culture, wanted to completely eradicate pre-revolutionary culture.<sup>79</sup> In addition, the period of the first New Economic Policy was fairly liberal, and allowed for frequent contact with the outside: numerous foreigners visited Leningrad in the 1920s, including composers Darius Milhaud, Alban Berg, Béla Bartók, Franz Schreker, Paul Hindemith, as well as conductors and performers Bruno Walter, Erich Kleiber, Otto Klemperer, Joseph Szigeti, and Artur Schnabel.<sup>80</sup> With the window of ideological freedom wide open, in 1926, the Leningrad Association of Contemporary Music (LACM) was formed, a group explicitly dedicated to the exploration of modernism, and in particular to promoting these Western composers in Russia.<sup>81</sup> The zeal of LACM, combined with the visits from abroad prompted a series of premieres of avant-garde operas, some of which might still have been shied away from in the West. These included:

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<sup>76</sup> Herbert Lindenberger, *Situating Opera: Period, Genre, Reception* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 175.

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*, 177.

<sup>78</sup> Rosamund Bartlett, 'Shostakovich as Opera Composer', in *The Cambridge Companion to Shostakovich*, ed. Pauline Fairclough and David Fanning (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008): 179-97. 180.

<sup>79</sup> Bartlett, 'Shostakovich', 179. See also Philip Ross Bullock, 'Staging Stalinism: The Search for Soviet Opera in the 1930s,' *Cambridge Opera Journal* 18, no. 1 (2006): 83-108. 85.

<sup>80</sup> Bartlett, 'Shostakovich', 181.

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.*

Strauss' *Salome*, Schreker's *Der ferne Klang*, *The Love for Three Oranges* – composed by Prokofiev, by now an émigré – and perhaps most importantly, Berg's *Wozzeck*, a performance that was attended by a young and impressionable Shostakovich.<sup>82</sup> It was the style of these European modernists, who sought to break tradition with their shock factors, defiance of traditional morality, and anti-theatricality, that would most influence Shostakovich in this decade, as he sought to create his own form of Russian modernism.<sup>83</sup>

Shostakovich came of age in this highly engaging and experimental artistic milieu. In addition to meeting in person many of these foreign composers who visited Leningrad, including Berg, Milhaud, Honegger, and Bartók,<sup>84</sup> he was also surrounded by the rapidly developing schools of modernist film of Sergei Eisenstein, and modernist theatre of Vsevolod Meyerhold. Indeed, perhaps the most formative experience in Shostakovich's early career was his collaboration with Meyerhold, whom Marina Frolova-Walker has identified as the source and origin that inspired Russian modernist opera in addition to theatre.<sup>85</sup> In the early 1900s, the young director grew dissatisfied with the state of theatre in the country; he excoriated the overwrought, naturalistic acting of the Moscow Art Theatre in particular, declaring, 'naturalistic theatre teaches the actor to express himself in a finished, clearly defined manner; there is no room for the play of allusion or for conscious understatement...it knows nothing of the power of suggestion.'<sup>86</sup> He argued that what they were doing was counterproductive, and the more they attempted to 'present a lifelike depiction of reality, the less convincing it was.'<sup>87</sup> Instead, Meyerhold developed an entirely new school in theatre, which he called *biomechanics*.

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<sup>82</sup> Ibid, 182.

<sup>83</sup> Lindenberger, *Situating Opera*, 176-82.

<sup>84</sup> Bartlett, 'Shostakovich', 183.

<sup>85</sup> Marina Frolova-Walker, 'Russian Opera between Modernism and Romanticism', in *The Cambridge Companion to Twentieth-Century Opera*, ed. Mervyn Cooke (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005): 181-96. 182.

<sup>86</sup> Anna Shulgat, 'Vsevolod Meyerhold: Actor as the Texture of Theatre', *Stanislavski Studies* 4, no. 2 (2016): 175-84. 177-8.

<sup>87</sup> Alexander Burry, 'Vsevolod Meyerhold', in *The Russian Avant-Garde and Radical Modernism: An Introductory Reader*, ed. Denis Ioffe and Frederick White (Brighton: Academic Studies Press, 2012): 357-84. 360.

He was inspired by two unlikely sources: Frederick Winslow Taylor, the American inventor, and ‘reflexology’. Taylor, who was admired by Lenin among many others, pioneered the study of ‘scientific management’, whereby he argued that worker efficiency could be augmented by eliminating extraneous movements and enhancing the most suitable ones.<sup>88</sup> Reflexology, on the other hand, was a trendy philosophy of the time that argued, ‘emotional consciousness and its transitory states were directly linked to the physical body’.<sup>89</sup> Combining these theories, Meyerhold developed his system of *biomechanics*: the goal was to use the most efficient movement to evoke predetermined emotional responses from the audience.<sup>90</sup> By doing this, Meyerhold relied on the audience’s imagination and ability to draw their own conclusions, and he enhanced these new acting methods by using stylised sets rather than realistic ones.<sup>91</sup> These practices were all fundamentally opposed to the doctrine of Socialist Realism that would soon overtake the official mandates for art, and would ultimately lead to Meyerhold’s arrest and execution in 1940.

In 1927, Meyerhold offered Shostakovich a job in his theatre. The job was only that of a rehearsal pianist, but as the offer came from the most visionary avant-garde artist of his time, Shostakovich did not dream of turning it down.<sup>92</sup> And so, only a few months after witnessing the Leningrad premiere of *Wozzeck* and first noting his intention to compose an opera based on one of Gogol’s so-called *Petersburg Tales*, ‘The Nose’, Shostakovich found himself journeying to join an artist who was not only a radical, but also one of the most prominent Gogol interpreters of the era.<sup>93</sup> Though Shostakovich’s work at the theatre only lasted for two months, he found himself in a position to observe the adaptation process of Gogol’s *Revizor*

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<sup>88</sup> Mel Gordon, 'Meyerhold's Biomechanics', *The Drama Review* 18, no. 3 (1974): 73-88. 75.

<sup>89</sup> *Ibid*, 76.

<sup>90</sup> *Ibid*, 78.

<sup>91</sup> Burry, 'Vsevolod Meyerhold', 362.

<sup>92</sup> Laurel E. Fay, *Shostakovich: A Life* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 45.

<sup>93</sup> Lev Hakobian, 'Introductory Article', in *Nos: Opera v trekh deistviakh, desiati kartinakh, Soch. 15*, by Dmitry Shostakovich (Moscow: Izdatel'stvo DSCH, 2015): 535-40. 535.

(*The Inspector General*) and other plays. Shostakovich watched closely as Meyerhold took liberties with his Gogol adaptation, even going so far as to change the text so that the humorous jabs at nineteenth-century bureaucrats more directly applied to the Soviet context.<sup>94</sup> He noted that it was Meyerhold's first priority to bring the classics into collision with contemporary reality, but that he did not bother to explain everything to the audience. Rather, he raised questions and left them drifting, unanswered.

Meyerhold's 1926 production of *The Inspector General* shocked the Moscow theatre world and became a source for all adaptors to reckon with in years hence. Meyerhold broke convention by presenting the characters not in historical costume, but in contemporary garb; they might have just stepped from the Moscow streets and onto the stage.<sup>95</sup> The acerbic satire combined with the hints of criticism of modern life alienated many of the high-minded symbolists, such as the poet Andrei Bely.<sup>96</sup> Meyerhold, however, freely cut and added dialogue and made no pretence of faithfulness to the text; his priority was not authenticity, but impact, and he altered the text to bring it closer to the Soviet context.<sup>97</sup> The influence of Meyerhold on Shostakovich is evidenced not in a similar approach to text (for the composer espoused faithfulness to the source as a sacred duty, even if he did add material), but in his fluidity of story-telling and desire to engage with his own society. Shostakovich would write in his diaries after beginning work on *The Nose*, 'I have symphonized Gogol's text not in the form of an "absolute", "pure" symphony, but proceeding from a theatrical symphony which is represented by V. Meyerhold's production *The Inspector General*.<sup>98</sup>

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<sup>94</sup> Burry, 'Vsevolod Meyerhold', 363.

<sup>95</sup> *Ibid.*, 365.

<sup>96</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>97</sup> Alexander Tumanov, 'Correspondence of Literary Text and Musical Phraseology in Shostakovich's Opera *The Nose* and Gogol's Fantastic Tale', *Russian Review* 52, no. 3 (1993): 397-414. 404; Burry, 'Vsevolod Meyerhold', 375.

<sup>98</sup> Tumanov, 'Correspondence', 402.

For his own Gogol adaptation, Shostakovich set out to write his own libretto in the tradition of Modest Musorgsky and Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov before him. He completed the first two acts before feeling constricted by his own poetic limitations, and enlisted the help of established writers for the third act. Shostakovich leaned heavily on the advice of one extraordinary wordsmith (whose influence can be detected even in the first two acts). This was another artist of the radical avant-garde, Evgenii Zamiatin, now best known for his dystopian novel *My (We)*, which was suppressed by the Soviet censorship board in 1919. At the time, however, Zamiatin had gained a significant reputation for adapting classic novels for the stage, having just completed a version of Nikolai Leskov's novella *Levsha (The Lefthander)*.<sup>99</sup> Between Meyerhold and Zamiatin, therefore, the personalities influencing Shostakovich's *The Nose* were among the most radical of the day.

For the final act, the composer relied heavily on two other trusted writers, Georgii Ionin and Aleksander Preis, the latter of whom would become the librettist of the infamous *Lady Macbeth*. In partnership with these two colleagues, Shostakovich followed in the footsteps of his predecessors by latching onto the authority of the original text, and endeavouring to translate it verbatim into opera. His work was at the same time meticulous and liberal. Consumed with the idea of capturing Gogol's true intention, he was unsatisfied by the published text alone, and even consulted the original, uncensored manuscripts of 'The Nose'.<sup>100</sup> But he also felt no scruples in borrowing sections from other Gogol plays, and even other Russian novels, and inserting them into 'The Nose'; for instance, he inserted Smerdiakov's song from Fyodor Dostoevsky's *Brat'ia Karamazovy (The Brothers Karamazov)* into the mouth of the servant Ivan in his opera.<sup>101</sup> In comparison to Musorgsky and Rimsky-Korsakov,

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<sup>99</sup> Hakobian, 'Introductory Article', 535.

<sup>100</sup> Tumanov, 'Correspondence', 400.

<sup>101</sup> Ibid, 400.

Shostakovich was reckless with his sources; but compared to the other prominent adaptors of Gogol around him in the 1920s, in particular Meyerhold, Shostakovich was the conservative.

In 1928, Shostakovich finished *The Nose* and auditioned it in front of the Artistic Council of the Leningrad opera houses, where it was immediately accepted by the Maly Opera Theatre<sup>102</sup> – a theatre which had become the beacon of the avant-garde in the 1920s.<sup>103</sup> The thirst for experimental works at that moment was so intense, however, that the Bolshoi grew jealous and also requested an audition. They accepted it, and even engaged Meyerhold as the prospective director. After many false starts and postponements, however, the Bolshoi production ultimately never materialised.<sup>104</sup> The Maly production did go forward, but was embroiled in controversy nearly from the moment the curtain rose in January of 1930. The opera was mercilessly criticised for being not sufficiently ideological, and not sufficiently accessible for the working class.<sup>105</sup> It was performed sixteen times in 1930 before it disappeared from the repertoire.<sup>106</sup> Given the enthusiasm that greeted this opera at the auditions, the reaction to the premiere can only have come as a surprise to Shostakovich. It was a sign of the coming surge of artistic restrictions in the 1930s.

The seeds of Russian modernist opera which had germinated with Meyerhold, and grown with Shostakovich, by this point a self-proclaimed modernist,<sup>107</sup> were prematurely stifled. By the 1930s, the beginnings of a new genre of modernist opera was replaced by the Soviet song opera, a genre which combined lyrical music with plots that cast personal drama into relief against a backdrop of national history.<sup>108</sup> And by 1936, the Stalinist opera project had begun in earnest, with all of its controls, incentive structures, and punishments.<sup>109</sup> For

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<sup>102</sup> Fay, *Shostakovich*, 45.

<sup>103</sup> Bartlett, 'Shostakovich', 182.

<sup>104</sup> Fay, *Shostakovich*, 46.

<sup>105</sup> *Ibid*, 55.

<sup>106</sup> *Ibid*, 56.

<sup>107</sup> Tumanov, 'Correspondence', 399.

<sup>108</sup> Bullock, 'Staging Stalinism', 91, 107.

<sup>109</sup> Marina Frolova-Walker, 'The Soviet Opera Project: Ivan Dzerzhinsky vs. Ivan Susanin', *Cambridge Opera Journal* 18, no. 2 (2006): 181-216. 182.

decades, the operas of Shostakovich were silent, and the operas of Prokofiev only made it to the stage with a good deal of ongoing difficulty. The resurrection of *The Nose* and *The Gambler* in 1974, therefore, was beyond symbolic. While there was no public acknowledgement that cutting off the artistic experimentation of the 1920s had been a mistake of the Communist Party, allowing these works to return in such a grand way was as close as the government would come to both an apology and an invitation to create more art in a similar vein. A now anachronistic modernism was being welcomed, and by the beginning of the 1970s, as in the 1920s, theatres were once again hungry for Russian operas with a quality of novelty about them.

The Bolshoi Theatre's most esteemed director, Pokrovsky, had the idea of reviving *The Nose* around 1972, but since the Theatre did not agree to produce it, he signed it on as the inaugural performance of the new Moscow Chamber Music Theatre.<sup>110</sup> (There is some evidence that Bolshoi officials at the theatre regretted this decision, however, as by late 1974 the director of the theatre was railing against his staff, trying to understand the disgraceful state of having no Shostakovich operas in their repertoire.)<sup>111</sup> By the time *The Nose* actually premiered, Shostakovich had been completely rehabilitated and was considered one of the great living Soviet composers: mentions of him in *Sovetskaia muzyka* in the 1970s resound with praise while muting past scandal. For example, in a 1976 article about the history of the Bolshoi Theatre, the paragraph about the 1930s states matter-of-factly that *Lady Macbeth of Mtsensk* was also premiered in that decade, and mentions nothing of its more complex history (hardly a surprise, given the profile of the journal and its editorial board).<sup>112</sup> And by 1974, audiences were finally ready for *The Nose* as well, and the performances were greeted with rapturous applause and approval.<sup>113</sup>

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<sup>110</sup> Fay, *Shostakovich*, 281.

<sup>111</sup> RGALI, f. 648, o. 27, ed.kh. 72: 61

<sup>112</sup> *Sovetskaia muzyka*, March 1976, 29.

<sup>113</sup> Fay, *Shostakovich*, 281.

The other premiere that took place in 1974, which undoubtedly had an impact on Shchedrin, was Prokofiev's *The Gambler*. Growing up in a similar milieu to that of Shostakovich, while still a student at conservatory, a bold young Prokofiev began to plan how he would tackle a Russian literary giant that no other major composer had yet approached: Dostoevsky. He was only twenty-three in 1914 when he embarked on the ambitious project.<sup>114</sup> It was the novel *The Gambler*, ideal because it is the most action-packed – and perhaps the least philosophical – of Dostoevsky's major works, but one that still required liberal adaptation to turn into a coherent musical work. Like Shostakovich, Prokofiev forsook rhyming convention and aimed instead for close adherence to the original text.<sup>115</sup> By 1917, he had completed the full score, and a production was planned at the Mariinsky Theatre (despite some resistance from the more conservative members of the theatre's Artistic Council, such as Cesar Cui and Aleksandr Glazunov). Had everything gone as planned, the production, directed by Meyerhold, would have premiered the following year, but the Revolution curtailed all hope of new productions.<sup>116</sup> *The Gambler* struggled to receive its first full premiere: a substantially revised version was shown in Brussels in 1929, a French radio channel gave a broadcast performance of it in 1956, and Gennadii Rozhdestvenskii also conducted a radio version in Moscow in 1963.<sup>117</sup> It was not premiered in earnest in Russia, however, until 1974, when the Bolshoi Theatre welcomed it home as a neglected classic of Soviet repertoire.

In the early 1970s, the Bolshoi began to make a conscious effort to restore Prokofiev to the repertoire. In fact, in some ways, Prokofiev effectively missed his chance to be hailed as an avant-gardist and went straight to being welcomed as a classic of the 'golden vault' of composers. In a meeting of the Theatre's Artistic Council on 17 May 1974, Molchanov noted

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<sup>114</sup> Harlow Robinson, 'Dostoevsky and Opera: Prokofiev's "The Gambler"', *Musical Quarterly* 70, no. 1 (1984): 96-106. 97.

<sup>115</sup> *Ibid.*, 103.

<sup>116</sup> *Ibid.*, 98.

<sup>117</sup> *Ibid.*

the significance of bringing Prokofiev back to the stage, starting with the premiere of his ballet *Kamemnyi tsvetok* (*The Stone Flower*) the previous year: ‘thank goodness that *finally*, albeit with difficulty, Prokofiev is starting to appear in between the walls of our theatre... we now have *War and Peace* because this is our golden vault!’<sup>118</sup> At another moment he emphasised the point again: ‘the fact that the number of Prokofiev’s works that we show is growing every year speaks volumes. It indicates just what value the art of Prokofiev holds for all of Soviet music and theatre.’<sup>119</sup> In discussing the new premieres for the 1973-1974 season, Molchanov officially dubbed Prokofiev ‘classical’ rather than ‘Soviet’. As usual, he announced to his colleagues that the repertoire of Russia’s greatest theatre could not just be classical, but must include that of Soviet composers, announcing, ‘I don’t speak of Prokofiev, who is already a classical composer. We need works of Soviet composers, we need to be communicating with our contemporaries!’<sup>120</sup>

By this point, it was clear the artists of the Bolshoi were supposed to accept that Prokofiev was important, and yet he did not fill the chasm of contemporary composers: this was the new Party line. But it was also apparent that the attitude of performers toward this repertoire was divided. The officials might consider him classical, but to the singers, he was a modernist whose progressive musical language challenged the traditional ilk of the theatre. In preparing the premiere of *The Gambler*, for example, the conductor, Lazarev (also the composer of the previously mentioned *Leniniana*), expressed his implicit exasperation about the music and its inaccessibility, noting that the only reason even *he* understood it is that he had spent so much time rehearsing it, and that the rhythmic and intonational structures were so ‘distinctive’ that the musicians had trouble learning it.<sup>121</sup> In spite of his reservations, however, he recognised his duty: his task as a conductor was to bring attention to the fact that this music

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<sup>118</sup> RGALI, f. 648, o. 27, ed.kh. 72: 61.

<sup>119</sup> RGALI, f. 648, o. 27, ed.kh. 96: 7.

<sup>120</sup> RGALI, f. 648, o. 27, ed.kh. 72: 15.

<sup>121</sup> RGALI, f. 648, o. 27, ed.kh. 73: 21.

was written by ‘a Russian person, a Soviet composer’.<sup>122</sup> The director of the production, Pokrovsky again, also acknowledged the difficulties of adapting to this repertoire, recalling that when the likes of Britten and Prokofiev were introduced a few years prior, the troupe struggled, and required a far longer rehearsal period than for other operas in the repertoire.<sup>123</sup> Early on in the process, Molchanov even worried that they would not find a way to ‘make *The Gambler* our own’ because of this complexity.<sup>124</sup> He admitted in a public forum that, ‘The problem of producing Prokofiev on the stage of a musical theatre is particularly complex because his music requires new answers to questions of performance art. That is, it raises multifaceted aesthetic problems which the troupe has to address anew every time it approaches Prokofiev.’<sup>125</sup>

In addition to reckoning with the musical language, however, they also had to reckon with the plot – that is, with how to turn the story of a dissolute gambler into a tale with appropriate Soviet morals. It was Pokrovsky’s task to explain to the Artistic Council how this could be done. His first hurdle was justifying the ‘strange’ juxtaposition of these two artists – the happy joker Prokofiev, and the philosopher Dostoevsky. He would dismiss these as stereotypes, however, and argue that both have many angles, and Dostoevsky ought to be made happier anyway.<sup>126</sup> When it came to the plot, Pokrovsky performed semantic gymnastics to demonstrate how the opera is actually optimistic. He claimed that, in fact, none of the characters is the protagonist, but rather, the *composer* is actually the protagonist; therefore, though the plot is tragic, the overall effect is optimistic because it demonstrates how the composer shows compassion and empathy for the characters and their fate.<sup>127</sup> He also

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<sup>122</sup> Ibid.

<sup>123</sup> RGALI, f. 648, o. 27, ed.kh. 73: 5.

<sup>124</sup> RGALI, f. 648, o. 27, ed.kh. 72: 60.

<sup>125</sup> RGALI, f. 648, o. 27, ed.kh. 96: 7.

<sup>126</sup> RGALI, f. 648, o. 27, ed.kh. 73: 6.

<sup>127</sup> Ibid, 8.

persuaded the committee that it was a tale that concerns ‘man’s understanding of belonging to his clan and tribe’, a perfectly acceptable Soviet theme.<sup>128</sup>

Overall, *The Gambler* proved to be a success. The premiere coincided with the All Union Plenum of Soviet Composers, and nearly all of Soviet musical society gathered to witness the occasion; some members of the establishment found it hard to imagine there could be a more anticipated event in the artistic life of the country.<sup>129</sup> Even for those who already were in favour of this production and believed in it, Molchanov noted, it exceeded expectations.<sup>130</sup> Despite the apparent approval of audiences and officials, however, public discourse was slow to spark, as the press was not sure how they were supposed to interact with this kind of music. Molchanov expressed his amazement that with the exception of one article in *Sovetskaia Rossiia*, the press overlooked *The Gambler* entirely.<sup>131</sup> He had expected that since many people held ‘contradictory’ opinions about Prokofiev, this production would be exactly the kind of event that could kindle discussion about various aspects of cultural and artistic life; he expressed his hope that the press would engage and fuel this discussion.<sup>132</sup> Alas, however, contrary to the hopes of the Bolshoi’s director, the debates that had raged over the status of Prokofiev’s memory in the 1960s had subsided; he was no longer controversial, but an accepted paragon of Soviet music.<sup>133</sup> Shostakovich and Prokofiev slipped onto the stage as, respectively, an accepted modernist and an accepted classic with very little public argument. In fact, one year after the premiere of *The Gambler* the initial difficulty of learning and producing this opera was forgotten, and it was widely praised as the revelation of a Soviet classic.<sup>134</sup>

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<sup>128</sup> RGALI, f. 648, o. 27, ed.kh. 73: 10.

<sup>129</sup> RGALI, f. 648, o. 27, ed.kh. 96: 8.

<sup>130</sup> Ibid, 9.

<sup>131</sup> Ibid.

<sup>132</sup> Ibid, 10.

<sup>133</sup> Leonid Maximenkov, ‘Prokofiev’s Immortalisation’, in *Sergey Prokofiev and His World*, ed. Simon Morrison (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2018): 285-332. Esp. 311-8.

<sup>134</sup> RGALI, f. 2329, o. 23, ed.kh. 371: 53.

## The Fourth way – Shchedrin and *Dead Souls*

For Shchedrin, the beginning of the 1970s had been a whirlwind of contrasting artistic stimuli. He had participated in discussions about Molchanov's and Taktakishvili's Socialist Realist operas,<sup>135</sup> fought for the premiere of Schnittke's avant-garde Symphony No. 1, and witnessed the resurrection of two relics of 1920s modernism: *The Gambler* and *The Nose*. He had also, by this point, reached a favourable status, one that suggested conscious amnesia on the part of officials about his past troubles with *Not Love Alone* and *Carmen Suite*;<sup>136</sup> the Ministry of Culture was readily promoting him at home and abroad as one of the leading Soviet composers, 'in the ranks of D. Shostakovich, A. Khachaturian, D. Kabalevsky, and T. Khrennikov'.<sup>137</sup> Some home-grown promotional material for foreign tours went so far as to rewrite history, claiming that while most composers suffer mishaps along the treacherous path of artistic self-discovery, Shchedrin suffered nothing of the kind.<sup>138</sup> What Shchedrin did with his new status and this wealth of exposure to all manner of operas was to create his own – not in the style of the other composers writing for the Bolshoi at the time, nor in a completely avant-garde style like Schnittke, but rather, inspired by the spirit of the 1920s as presented by Prokofiev and Shostakovich. It would be an attempt to reanimate the promising developments that had been so suddenly curtailed by the initiation of the Stalinist opera project in 1936.

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<sup>135</sup>See invitations to Shchedrin from Bolshoi Theatre Artistic Council, RGALI, f. 3267, o. 1 ed.kh. 404.

<sup>136</sup> Maya Plisetskaya, *I, Maya Plisetskaya* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001), 276. See also Chapter 1 of this thesis. In addition, his conflicts did not stop there: personal correspondence reveals his anger at Mikhail Gorbachev a decade later for other restrictions. See RGALI, f. 3267, o. 2, ed.kh. 80.

<sup>137</sup> This was in programme material for a tour of Sweden and France in 1974 organised by the state concert organisation, *Goskonsert*. See RGALI, f. 3267, o. 1, ed.kh. 377, 2.

<sup>138</sup> *Ibid*, 5.

## **Narrative structure and substance**

Shchedrin aligned his opera with Shostakovich and Prokofiev by basing it on two aesthetic principles entirely fitting for an adaptation of Gogol, but completely unfitting for the principles of Socialist Realism: two branches of musical irony – the musical grotesque, and musical satire. I will demonstrate how Shchedrin's appropriation of irony in *Dead Souls* renders it a musically anomalous opera for its decade, and links it closely to Russian modernism of the early twentieth century. Even before mentioning the music, however, Shchedrin's choice of text demonstrates an alignment with this interrupted tradition rather than with that of his peers. Like Prokofiev and Shostakovich (not to mention Tchaikovsky and Rimsky-Korsakov), he tackled a Russian literary giant, rather than a Soviet one or a theme of his own invention; choosing Gogol, specifically, made the connection to Shostakovich all the more obvious. But for Shchedrin, interpreting Gogol in a Soviet environment would not be straightforward. The Soviet authorities had had a fraught relationship with the author throughout the century, and as a result, Gogol, though a classic, had worn many different masks in the Soviet era.

Unlike other authors who were simply suppressed or condemned, Gogol was constantly manipulated and repositioned to meet the evolving ideological needs of the Soviet establishment. Gogol's ironic style was complex enough to provoke – and to withstand – varied interpretations. The immediate post-revolutionary period of 1917-1920 was too chaotic for the government to be concerned with formalising its views on how Gogol ought to be treated, and in the 1920s, the Party debates about literature were still fairly liberal, and allowed varieties of interpretations.<sup>139</sup> By the 1930s, however, the Party had crystallised its views on Gogol: he was permitted as an artistic source, but only if positioned as a realist and as a critic of capitalism.<sup>140</sup> As a literary model, Gogol was useful only as an example of how to be a writer (due to his

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<sup>139</sup> Robert L. Strong. 'The Soviet Interpretation of Gogol', *American Slavic and East European Review* 14, no. 4 (1955): 528-39. 530.

<sup>140</sup> *Ibid*, 530-1.

unusual biography and propensity for self-criticism) rather than how to write.<sup>141</sup> The literary schools that had so influenced Meyerhold, Shostakovich, and Prokofiev were condemned: neither the interpretation of the Formalists, who focused on Gogol's techniques and style, nor of the anti-Formalists, who focused exclusively on Gogol's social context, was allowed.<sup>142</sup> In the 1940s, the emphasis shifted again, and Gogol was touted as a symbol of struggle with the West. It was his short story 'Taras Bul'ba' that became most popular in this period, since to the Party it demonstrated the appropriate commitment to the state over family (though finding these sentiments in the rest of Gogol's writing would be a stretch even with rigorous exercise of the imagination).<sup>143</sup> In the Post-War era, however, personal, internal conflict came back into fashion, and Gogol was moulded to fit the latest fad: he was now flaunted as an artful portrayer of characters with natural tendencies toward self-contradiction. As a 1952 article in the newspaper *Pravda* stated for Gogol's centenary celebration, 'Not everything is ideal in our country...we should not be afraid to show our shortcomings... we need our Gogols and [Saltykov-] Shchedrins.'<sup>144</sup> For once, the authorities were celebrating complexity, albeit of a limited variety. By the 1970s, therefore, artistic restrictions had loosened in literature as well as in music, but charged expectations of handling Gogol – especially his most celebrated work, *Dead Souls* – pervaded artistic circles.<sup>145</sup>

On the surface, the plot of *Dead Souls* is straightforward enough, and allows for the late-Soviet approval of personal, internal conflict. An ambitious nineteenth-century gentleman, Pavel Ivanovich Chichikov, devises a scheme to gain a fortune: he realises that if he purchases

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<sup>141</sup> Stephen Moeller-Sally, *Gogol's Afterlife: The Evolution of a Classic in Imperial and Soviet Russia* (Evanston, Ill.: Northwestern University Press, 2002), 150.

<sup>142</sup> Strong, 'The Soviet Interpretation', 529.

<sup>143</sup> Ibid, 532; Moeller-Sally, *Gogol's Afterlife*, 156.

<sup>144</sup> Moeller-Sally, *Gogol's Afterlife*, 157.

<sup>145</sup> There was a particularly lively scene in Gogol film adaptation during these years, including these films based on his texts: Aleksei Batalov's *Shchinel'* (*The Overcoat*, 1959), Leonid Trauberg's *Mertvye dushi* (*Dead Souls*, 1960), Aleksandr Rou's *Noch' pered Rozhdestvom* (*The Night Before Christmas*, 1961), and, of course Konstantin Ershov's horror film *Vii* (1967). A discussion of the film adaptations is outside the scope of this chapter, but would make an interesting future comparison to Shchedrin's approach.

the deeds to dead serfs (a word synonymous for ‘souls’ in Russian) he can take out a loan against them and gain status and wealth. He visits various landowners as he travels throughout Russia with his coachman, gains friends and notoriety, but is eventually caught. The complexity of Gogol’s work is not in the events, but in the telling: rife with irony and dry wit, the author leaves no subject above reproach or mockery, from the greed of various landowners, to the vaunted, hyperbolised purity of the peasants. In adapting Gogol the question for Shchedrin would be – as it had been for every other adaptor of Gogol – how to position the author’s ironic tale in his own times. Would he focus on criticism of contemporary events, as Meyerhold did, or on the humour and absurdity of life in general, as Shostakovich did, or would he preserve it as a piece of anachronistic irony? Ultimately, Shchedrin mixed seemingly faithful adherence to original text with ironically paired music to satirise aspects of contemporary Soviet society, and particularly, contemporary Soviet opera.

In choosing which of the texts to include, however, Shchedrin’s adaptation principles would hinge around what to do with Gogol’s narrator. *Dead Souls* is narrated by a complex, humorous, and thoroughly unreliable character, and much of the irony of the novel comes across in the conflict between how he depicts the action, and what is actually happening. The ethos of the epic poem emanates from this character. A representative example of this technique is the passage in which the narrator claims that he could not possibly describe the ladies of the town of N (the narrator’s anonymised name for the location of the action):

To begin to explain it, one would have to say a lot about the ladies themselves, about their society, to describe in vivid colours, so to speak, their qualities of soul: but for the author that is very difficult. On the one hand, he is prevented by his boundless respect for the wives of the dignitaries, and on the other hand... on the other hand – it is simply difficult. The ladies of the town N. were... no, it is in no way possible for me: I really feel timid.<sup>146</sup>

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<sup>146</sup> Nikolai Gogol, *Dead Souls*, trans. Richard Pevear and Larissa Volokhonsky (New York: Vintage Books, 1997), 159.

After this firm resolution not to discuss the ladies, and then a brief digression onto another topic, the narrator surreptitiously slips into a description of the ladies anyway.<sup>147</sup> This kind of diversion and undermining of the narrator's credibility occurs repeatedly in the novel, and accounts for a great deal of the satire of the gentry and the peasantry.

An early draft reveals how Shchedrin considered including a narrator, and how this would have framed his adaptation. His narrator would have acted as a commentator looking in at the state of Russia. For the prologue Shchedrin experimented with portions of the passage of the narrator's famous musings about Russia from the end of Part I of the epic poem:<sup>148</sup>

Ah, troika, troika, swift as a bird, who was it who first invented you? Only among a hardy race could you have come to birth – only in a land which, though poor and rough, sprawls across half the world, and spans so many miles the counting whereof would leave one with aching eyes.<sup>149</sup>

A separate clipping:

Ah horses, horses: surely whirlwinds are in your manes!<sup>150</sup>

And then he skips some text from the novel and adds the following cut-out:

And isn't it so, oh Russia of mine, that you are also speeding like a troika which nought can overtake? Is not the road smoking beneath your wheels, and the bridges thundering as you cross them, and everything being left behind you?<sup>151</sup>

Finally, he extracted the last few lines from Part I of *Dead Souls*:

'O my Russia! Wither are you headed? Answer me! But no answer comes – only the strange sound of your halter-bells. Rent into a thousand pieces, the air roars past you, for you are overtaking the whole world, and shall one day force all nations, all empires to stand aside and make way for you!'<sup>152</sup>

Shchedrin ultimately struck this idea, however, and eliminated all of these passages – and the narrator himself – from his final version. These omissions were not lost on the Artistic Council of the Bolshoi Theatre. In the audition described in the introduction, Arkhipova

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<sup>147</sup> Ibid, 159–60.

<sup>148</sup> RGALI, f. 3267 o. 1, ed.kh. 266: 2.

<sup>149</sup> Ibid.

<sup>150</sup> Ibid, 4.

<sup>151</sup> Ibid, 3.

<sup>152</sup> Ibid, 5.

immediately complained about the absence of the famous ‘Troika passage’.<sup>153</sup> Shchedrin defended his adaptation, however, noting, ‘It wasn’t that I forgot to write “Troika” – I even wrote and have it, but that would have left us on a false note... I thought about it, but then decided I needed to sacrifice it for the sake of something closer.’<sup>154</sup> What was closer to them was pessimism, corruption, and ennui – all themes he would tease out instead of focusing on the triumph of Russia.

Beginning the opera with any of the aforementioned passages would have framed it as an optimistic commentary on Russia, and on Russian progress (particularly the Troika passage, which is one of the most famous in Russian literature and often memorised by Russian school children).<sup>155</sup> Given Russia’s economic troubles at the time, and the new ability to compare life in the Soviet Union to the superior living standards in the West, perhaps he decided this was not the moment to suggest Russia would overtake everyone like a swift troika (a traditional Russian sleigh pulled by three horses). Rather, Shchedrin simplified the prologue and transferred the weight of introducing the opera to a different party: the serfs themselves. In what is certainly a later draft of the libretto (but still far from finalised), he noted that the prologue would include the folk tune *Ni bely snegi* (*Not the White Snow*) with two soloists, a soprano and an alto.<sup>156</sup> Later, he went so far as to indicate that the soprano and alto would be folk singers, not opera singers, and that the wheel passage at the end would be sung by two peasants on the road.<sup>157</sup> With this frame, the opera begins and ends from the perspective of neither Gogol’s narrator nor of Gogol’s protagonist, who can examine the scenes from positions of relative comfort, but from the perspective of the titular characters, the dead souls. This interpretation puts a macabre frame around the story – we are forced to consider more

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<sup>153</sup> RGALI, f. 648, o. 27, ed.kh. 148: 18.

<sup>154</sup> Ibid, 39.

<sup>155</sup> This was eventually cut entirely. RGALI, f. 3267 o. 1, ed.kh. 266: 2. In my own grade school education in Moscow in the 1990s, I was still required to memorise this passage.

<sup>156</sup> RGALI, f. 3267, o. 2 ed.kh. 32: 2.

<sup>157</sup> RGALI, f. 3267 o. 1, ed.kh. 15: 4, and f. 3267 o. 1, ed.kh. 266: 276.

seriously the dead souls, and to ask what Chichikov asks throughout the novel: in what sense are they dead?

Shchedrin removed all traces of a narrator in favour of preserving the irony by means of the music alone, as I will demonstrate. This was controversial. Removing the narrator was in direct contradiction to recent Soviet adaptations of Gogol: both Bulgakov in his theatrical adaptation of *Dead Souls* in 1930, and Pokrovsky in the revival of *The Nose*, added spoken narrators. In the case of theatrical adaptation, Bulgakov could not imagine there could be an adequate interpretation of *Dead Souls* without the lyric digressions of the narrator.<sup>158</sup> The writer envisioned a character called the *Chtets* (reader), who would stand in a Roman portal which would signify the 'beautiful far away' from which Gogol claimed to have written his epic poem, and would be dressed as a traveller from the 1830s.<sup>159</sup> In addition, his narrator would occasionally interact with the characters, for example, appearing at the ball scene dressed in coat tails and a top hat and mingling with the dancers.<sup>160</sup> Bulgakov's narrator spoke lines not only from *Dead Souls*, but also from other letters and poems by Gogol, re-enforcing the clear image of this character not just as a narrator, but as the author himself.<sup>161</sup> Ultimately, this idea did not make it to the stage because Konstanin Stanislavskii, the head of the Moscow Art Theatre which commissioned the adaptation, disapproved.<sup>162</sup> In 1974, Pokrovsky must have also deemed this lack of a narrator in Shostakovich's *Nose* as a weakness in adaptation, and decided, with the approval of the composer, to add in some critical, spoken narration at the end. The characters would freeze on stage during this spoken narration, and then unfreeze and resume normal motion as they prepared to sing the finale. Though the amount of narration is

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<sup>158</sup> Lesley M. Milne, 'M. A. Bulgakov and "Dead Souls": The Problems of Adaptation', *The Slavonic and East European Review* 52, no. 128 (1974), 430.

<sup>159</sup> *Ibid.*, 428.

<sup>160</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>161</sup> *Ibid.*, 427.

<sup>162</sup> Stephany Gould, 'Romantic Literary Narrative into Opera: Towards a Poetics of Transposition' (ProQuest Dissertations Publishing, University of Wisconsin-Madison, 1997), 30.

limited, the effect is striking: it succeeds in reframing the entire story as one told through the eyes of a third party, and distances the opera from any remaining pretence of realism since the absurdity ends up being explained by situating the opera as hearsay.

After his early experiments with narrative passages, however, Shchedrin became actively opposed to the idea of inserting a speaking narrator, as is evidenced by a peculiar note printed in the first published vocal score of *Dead Souls*. On the first page of text after the list of characters and their vocal designations, Shchedrin added, ‘The author categorically forbids the insertion of any spoken text (despite any directorial decision)’.<sup>163</sup> He continued, ‘The idea of the author was intended for a vocal re-formulation of Gogol’s prose: not a single word is spoken, everything is sung, albeit in extremely varied manners of singing.’<sup>164</sup> Versions of this paragraph appear not only in the published score, but scrawled across many pages in early to late hand-written drafts, so often that it seems to reach the point of obsession.<sup>165</sup> In safeguarding his opera against the interference of some future director like Pokrovsky, Shchedrin also set himself apart from operas like Molchanov’s *The Dawns are Quiet Here* and Muradeli’s *October*, which are supplemented in their musical material with spoken narration and dialogue. Removing the narrator, however, does not mean that Shchedrin was simplifying Gogol. As Caryl Emerson has argued, the simplification of a text through operatic adaptation in no way signifies the simplification of the story itself, especially when viewed in its larger cultural context.<sup>166</sup> Rather, through this process, more of Shchedrin’s adaptation principles are revealed: the music becomes necessary – and sufficient – to understand his transposition of Gogol’s prose into a musical idiom. And it would need to be sufficient in order to communicate Shchedrin’s particular brand of irony.

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<sup>163</sup> Rodion Shchedrin, *Mertvye dushi* (Moscow: Sovetskii kompozitor, 1979), 4.

<sup>164</sup> Ibid.

<sup>165</sup> See, for example, RGALI, f. 3267, o. 1, ed.kh. 15.

<sup>166</sup> Caryl Emerson, ‘Back to the Future: Shostakovich’s Revision of Leskov’s “Lady Macbeth of Mtsensk District”’, *Cambridge Opera Journal* 1, no. 1 (1989): 59-78. 60.

## Misfit muses: Rossini and Musorgsky

In addition to the influence of Schnittke and the modernists, Shchedrin himself identified surprising sources of musical inspiration throughout his drafts of *Dead Souls*. A scribble at the bottom of a working draft of the libretto of *Dead Souls* asserted, ‘I don’t have just one model for this opera, such as, for example, Mozart’s *Don Giovanni* for Stravinsky’s *The Rake’s Progress* or...*The Stone Guest*...’.<sup>167</sup> Rather, on a loose-leaf scrap of paper inserted into his working version, he jotted that he had two ‘models’ for *Dead Souls*: Rossini’s *La Cenerentola* (*Cinderella*), and Musorgsky’s *Boris Godunov*.<sup>168</sup> This at first seems an incongruous set of influences, as on the surface these three operas share little in common, either in style or theme. *Cinderella* is a fairy tale, *Boris Godunov* a national historical drama, and *Dead Souls* an adaptation of classic Russian literature – and all are separated by chasms of time and musical convention. There is also the issue of exposure. While Shchedrin certainly would have seen *Boris Godunov* in its historical setting at the Bolshoi, *Cinderella* was not in the Bolshoi repertoire at all in Shchedrin’s working years (though admittedly *Il barbiere di Siviglia* was one of the most performed operas of the 1960s and 1970s).<sup>169</sup> He would have seen *Cinderella*, however, when La Scala brought it on tour to Moscow in May and June 1974, and from then on, hints of Rossini’s charm seeped into his interpretation of Gogol.<sup>170</sup>

The Russian admired many facets of Rossini’s writing. He often praised the delicacy and brilliance of the vocal lines; the fact that every opera conveys lightness and buoyance; Rossini’s melodic gift, which he thought was only equalled by Tchaikovsky, Mozart, and Chopin.<sup>171</sup> He also admired Rossini’s ability to create national character in music, what

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<sup>167</sup> RGALI, f. 3267, o. 2, ed.kh. 32: 25.

<sup>168</sup> RGALI, f. 3267, o. 1 ed.kh. 15: 7.

<sup>169</sup> RGALI, f. 2329, o. 23, ed.kh. 367: 1-15; f. 2329, o. 3, ed.kh. 1212; f. 648, o. 19, ed.kh. 332.; f. 648, o. 19, ed.kh 334;

<sup>170</sup>RGALI, f. 2329, o. 22, ed. kh. 1716: 20.

<sup>171</sup> RGALI, f. 3267, o. 2, ed.kh. 21: 4, 5, 20.

Shchedrin called, ‘the intonation of his own people’.<sup>172</sup> Rossini’s ensemble writing also made an impression on the composer. He called the sextet in *Cinderella* ‘so transparent, so delicate, so virtuosic that the ear hears all six lines... [such writing] is a rare gift’.<sup>173</sup> In addition, he argued that Rossini might have been the first opera composer to give each hero his or her own vocal character – a feature Shchedrin emulated assiduously in *Dead Souls*.<sup>174</sup> Indeed, it is Rossini’s name who appears more frequently than that of any other composer in his drafts, especially in his most robust working version, dated 1973-1975.<sup>175</sup> He scrawled one phrase at least four times as he embarked on his opera: ‘everything is in the voice, like Rossini’.<sup>176</sup> And then in a draft of the libretto, he remarked emphatically, ‘the opera should be a light work, transparent and without any extra notes... like Rossini’s *Cinderella*.’<sup>177</sup> Rossini was clearly on Shchedrin’s mind while writing *Dead Souls*.

Whether from conversations with Shchedrin or from keen listening, his colleagues picked up on the influence of Rossini. During the discussion after the audition of Shchedrin’s opera, bass soloist Aleksander Vedernikov commented that the opera was extremely difficult, like the virtuosic lines of Rossini, and another colleague, B.A. Rudenko, mentioned that the parts contain the techniques of Gaetano Donizetti and Rossini, but are built of ‘modern musical language’.<sup>178</sup> Arkhipova immediately suggested that to cast this opera, the Bolshoi would need to recruit the kind of singers that could perform *Cinderella*; they needed coloratura singers who had a special kind of preparation.<sup>179</sup> Fortunately, this would not be a trial at the Bolshoi: Italian opera had been a permanent fixture at the theatre since at least the 1840s, when an Italian troupe

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<sup>172</sup> Ibid, 9.

<sup>173</sup> Ibid.

<sup>174</sup> Ibid.

<sup>175</sup> RGALI, f. 3267, o. 1 ed.kh. 15: esp. 1-10.

<sup>176</sup> Ibid, 6.

<sup>177</sup> RGALI, f. 3267, o. 2, ed.kh. 32: 25.

<sup>178</sup> RGALI, f. 648, o. 27, ed.kh. 148: 15-6.

<sup>179</sup> Ibid, 11.

moved to Moscow to share the stage with the Russian troupe of the Bolshoi.<sup>180</sup> Enthusiasm for the Italian repertoire endured throughout the Soviet period, as repertoire lists demonstrate.<sup>181</sup> In addition, the powerful Russian mezzo school was perfectly developed for this demanding repertoire, and certain Soviet mezzos, like Zara Dolukhanova, even specialised in Rossini repertoire.<sup>182</sup> There was also a strong coloratura school. In fact, the three singers who would perform the soprano role in *Dead Souls* – Klara Kandinskaia, Marta Kostiuk, and Nina Larionova – were also the top Rossini sopranos at the theatre.<sup>183</sup> Arkhipova, though not a noted Rossini singer and originally tentative about taking on the role of Korobochka in *Dead Souls*, would eventually be persuaded, and would develop her own Rossini-like version of Russian mezzo singing for this opera.<sup>184</sup>

While Shchedrin was less explicit in his notes about how Musorgsky influenced his writing, I argue *Boris Godunov* served as a model for Shchedrin's philosophy of history in *Dead Souls*. *Boris Godunov* chronicles the tumultuous succession crisis and subsequent power struggle for the Russian throne known as the Time of Troubles (1598-1603). But it is not the triumphant national historical drama that might have been expected. As Emily Frey has argued, Musorgsky's *Boris* is distinctly pessimistic: his revised version of the ending features not a grand chorus, but 'single person lamenting the fate of the nation'.<sup>185</sup> The entire opera coalesces around this idea, the inability of the individual to influence anything.<sup>186</sup> This corresponds to the view of Russia and of individual autonomy in *Dead Souls*: despite the machinations of Chichikov, all amounts to nothing, and the lives of the peasants and of Russia carry on,

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<sup>180</sup> Svetlana Martynova, 'Italians in a Russian Manner: One Step from Serious to Funny', *Fontes Artis Musicae* 56, no. 1 (2009): 1-6. 2.

<sup>181</sup> RGALI, f. 2329, o. 23, ed.kh. 367: 1-15; f. 2329, o. 3, ed.kh. 1212; f. 648, o. 19, ed.kh. 332.; f. 648, o. 19, ed.kh. 334.

<sup>182</sup> I. M. Yampol'sky, 'Dolukhanova, Zara', *The Grove Book of Opera Singers Online* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008).

<sup>183</sup> RGALI f. 648, o. 19, ed.kh. 585: 1.

<sup>184</sup> RGALI f. 648, o. 27, ed.kh. 148: 11; f. 648, o. 19, ed.kh. 585: 1.

<sup>185</sup> Emily Frey, 'Boris Godunov and the Terrorist', *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 70, no. 1 (2017): 129-69. 132.

<sup>186</sup> *Ibid*, 169.

unchanged, as if nothing had happened. The individual remains impotent to change the fate of the nation.

On the one hand *Dead Souls* represents a fatalistic view of history and human action connected to Musorgsky. On the other, seeing Shchedrin through the lens of Rossini casts a different hue on the opera. While his cultural and historical reference point was Russian, his technical reference point was not Soviet or Russian at all, but Italian. Shchedrin imagined his opera as a sort of Russian *bel canto* – light-hearted, lightly textured, and full of sparkling virtuosity.<sup>187</sup> This incongruity between the levity of the music and the macabre subject matter is one of the first clues that this opera is out of the ordinary when compared to its three peer productions in the decade. The reference points and techniques diverge from the norm, and the clashes between them establish a humorous irony unique to this opera.

### **The music: three forms of irony**

The irony of Shchedrin's Gogol lies in the music. He resurrected a type of musical irony that had not been composed in Soviet opera since the 1930s – the final example before it was shut down was *Lady Macbeth of Mtsensk*. Socialist Realist opera, by definition, was supposed to be sincere, and its meaning intelligible. Musical irony conflicted with these goals in two respects: obscurity, and critique. In musical irony, at least one layer tends to be obscured in order to highlight another, an approach unacceptable for the Soviets, who expected overt messages. In addition, ironic music functions as a critique, but in Soviet operas, music is meant to function only as accompaniment that enhances and supports the text rather than adding contradictory elements (*The Dawns are Quiet Here* and *The Decembrists* are both excellent examples of this). Shostakovich had set a different precedent, however: he aimed not to

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<sup>187</sup> RGALI, f. 3267, o. 1 ed.kh. 15: 6.

accompany the voices with the orchestra, but rather to ‘symphonise’ Gogol. He emphasised that, ‘the elements of action and music are equal. Neither one nor the other occupies a predominant place. It is in this manner that I attempted to create a synthesis of music and theatrical presentation.’<sup>188</sup> Giving equal prominence to the words and music allows there to be contrasting meaning and dialogue between the elements. In *Dead Souls* Shchedrin recovers the ability to use the music as a critical interlocutor of the text by employing at least three kinds of musical irony: satire, parody, and most substantially, the grotesque. What Shchedrin prioritises through these techniques is making subtle jabs not just at Gogol’s targets – bureaucracy, corruption, self-importance – but at his own peers, and at Socialist Realist tropes in opera in general. In the following sections, I will demonstrate how Shchedrin accomplishes this by using Esti Sheinberg’s investigation of irony in Shostakovich’s music as a model.<sup>189</sup>

A genre as storied as satire, which dates back to Greek and Roman tragedy, has attracted countless studies and attempts at definition.<sup>190</sup> In a recent definition, however, Dieter Declercq has distilled persuasively its necessary and sufficient conditions: satire is a genre which sets out both to critique and to entertain, and requires the elements of moral criticism and diversion to interact.<sup>191</sup> It usually employs wit or ridicule to attack some vice or folly from a clear moral reference point.<sup>192</sup> These conditions must be met regardless of medium for something to be considered satire, rather than pseudo-satire, or simply political or critical art. In offering a musical definition, Sheinberg has suggested that satire is a sub-category of irony with two

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<sup>188</sup> Tumanov, ‘Correspondence’, 402.

<sup>189</sup> Esti Sheinberg, *Irony, Satire, Parody and the Grotesque in the Music of Shostakovich: A Theory of Musical Incongruities* (London: Routledge, 2017),

<sup>190</sup> Some important studies that informed this section include Dustin H. Griffin, *Satire: A Critical Reintroduction* (Lexington, Kentucky: University Press of Kentucky, 1994). Arthur Pollard, *Satire* (London: Routledge, 2017). Gilbert Highet, *The Anatomy of Satire* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1972). Jessica Milner Davis, *Satire and Politics: The Interplay of Heritage and Practice* (Basingstoke, Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017). George A. Test, *Satire: Spirit and Art* (Tampa: University of South Florida Press, 1991).

<sup>191</sup> Dieter Declercq, ‘A Definition of Satire (And Why a Definition Matters)’, *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 76, no. 3 (2018): 319-30. 327.

<sup>192</sup> Griffin, *Satire*, 2.

layers of meaning, one ‘ostensible and one hidden, of which the hidden should be preferred.’<sup>193</sup> It must relate to two sets of aesthetic, ethical, and musical norms relative to a given culture, and ultimately pokes fun at the one with which it complies.<sup>194</sup> This definition, however, is vague. I would refine it by bringing it into conversation with other definitions of satire from other media. I argue that while musical satire must consist of these two layers, as she suggests, there must be a serious critique; the associations of the hidden layer must be clearly *morally* preferable in some way, and the overall result must be entertaining.

Satire is the basis of the opening scene of Shchedrin’s *Dead Souls*. Shchedrin accomplishes this satire by establishing one musical unit which operates differently within two varied aesthetic (and moral) reference points. In a culture familiar with both reference points, the way in which Shchedrin manipulates the musical unit renders one set of views ridiculous in comparison to the other. Figure 1 outlines two reference points. On the left side are the Socialist Realist values, and on the right, are the preferred aesthetic values of Shchedrin’s

## Satire in *Dead Souls*, Scene 2

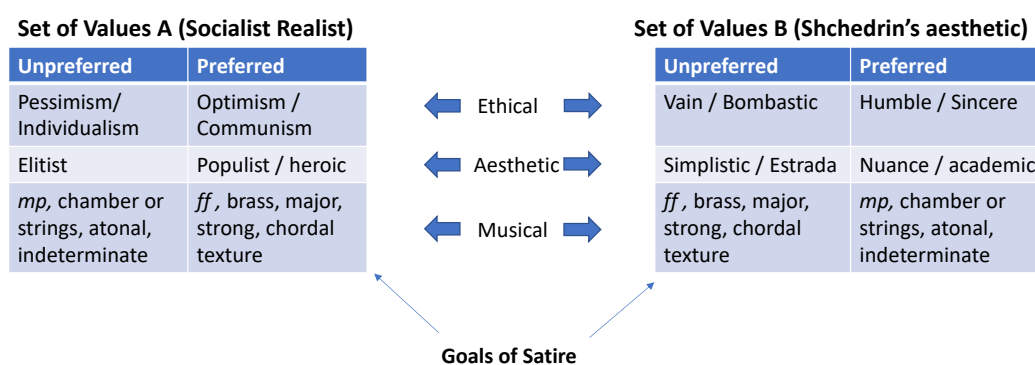


Figure 1 Satire in *Dead Souls*: Two sets of conflicting norms

<sup>193</sup> Sheinberg, *Irony*, 69.

<sup>194</sup> *Ibid*, 77.

academic music, which I gather as an aggregate from his compositions across the decade (looking especially at Piano Concerto No. 2, *Anna Karenina*, and the rest of *Dead Souls*).<sup>195</sup>

I illustrate how this functions in Scene 2 of the opera. The primary musical unit of this scene coheres with the preferred values for Socialist Realist opera, and yet with the rejected values of Shchedrin; this juxtaposition, to those familiar with both sets of norms, serves an entertaining critique – a satire of – the former. On the surface, the musical profile of this number puts it in the category of Socialist Realist norms, and the other operas being written by Shchedrin’s contemporaries: it opens with a triumphant, optimistic, brass fanfare. Nine solo characters sing in unison to an accompaniment of a distorted B-flat major chord, toasting their guest with the words, ‘Vivat, Pavel Ivanovich!’.<sup>196</sup> (See Figure 2) Interspersed with these cheers are chordal fanfares of the brass, which gradually distort as Shchedrin adds pitches that are further and further afield from the opening major chord, until tonality has disappeared altogether and only the rhythm of the fanfare remains. This scene is reminiscent of other Soviet operas, such as *The Decembrists*, *Leniniana*, and *The Dawns are Quiet Here* where fanfares and toasts greet heroes or revolutionaries (the rebels, Lenin himself, and the anti-aircraft gunners, respectively). But it is particularly reminiscent of one of Shchedrin’s own compositions: it is likely that he is satirising his own cantata, *Lenin in the People’s Heart* here, in which he uses exactly the same rhythm in a brass fanfare to introduce the chorus singing praise to Lenin. While Shchedrin matches his musical style, for a moment, to these formats, the context is ill-fitting: in this case, a group of slovenly, greedy, drunken landowners welcome a con-man with more vivacity than the occasion could possibly have merited – even if he had

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<sup>195</sup> In her dissertation, O. Sinel’nikova also persuasively identified the ‘constants’ of Shchedrin’s musical style, which reinforces my argument about his preferred aesthetic. See Part I, Chapter 2 of O.V. Sinel’nikova, *Rodion Shchedrin: konstanty i metamorfozy stilia* (Moscow: Moskovskaia gosudarstvennaia konservatoriia imeni P.I. Chaikovskogo, 2013).

<sup>196</sup> Shchedrin, *Mertye dushi*, 11.

not been faking his identity. It is a satire because on the one hand it is entertaining, but on the

Манилов *f* [4]  
Ви-вот, Павел Иванович! Ви-вот, Павел Иванович!

Почтмейстер *f*  
Ви-вот, Павел Иванович! Ви-вот, Павел Иванович!

Председатель Палаты *f*  
Ви-вот, Павел Иванович! Ви-вот, Павел Иванович!

Ноздрев *f*  
Ви-вот, Павел Иванович! Ви-вот, Павел Иванович!

Прокурор *f*  
Ви-вот, Павел Иванович! Ви-вот, Павел Иванович!

Полицеймейстер *f*  
Ви-вот, Павел Иванович! Ви-вот, Павел Иванович!

Губернатор *f*  
Ви-вот, Павел Иванович! Ви-вот, Павел Иванович!

Мижухев *f*  
Ви-вот, Павел Иванович! Ви-вот, Павел Иванович!

Собакевич *f*  
Ви-вот, Павел Иванович! Ви-вот, Павел Иванович!

[4]

Figure 2 Scene 2, satire of a Soviet greeting, *Dead Souls*, p. 11

other it poses a critique: the toast given is a chorus worthy of military grandeur, but the pomp rendered is out of proportion with the occasion, and thus devolves into absurdity. By using the

approved musical tropes for Soviet greetings, but not in the appropriate context, Shchedrin satirises the very Soviet practice of making much of a muchness – the hyperbolised triumphalism that greets tsars in classical Russian opera, and especially heroes and Communist leaders in Soviet opera. In this scene, Shchedrin used the music critically to update Gogol and make a commentary on the hackneyed, overblown celebrations of Soviet achievements.

The opera is even more intertwined with another subset of irony: the grotesque.<sup>197</sup> Like satire, the grotesque has attracted myriad attempts at definition.<sup>198</sup> Most scholars agree, however, on several necessary elements of the grotesque: the grotesque is a combination of the comic and the terrifying which succeeds in making the familiar unfamiliar; its methods can include combining incongruous forms (automatic, human, vegetable, animal, for example), or gross exaggeration.<sup>199</sup> It seeks to shock, disturb, or baffle the reader, listener, or viewer with violent contradiction.<sup>200</sup> The grotesque was a predominant aesthetic in Russian art in the first three decades of the twentieth century, championed especially by Boris Kustodiev (1878-1927) in art, the first Russian visual artist to be associated with the grotesque, and Meyerhold, who developed an entire theory around this aesthetic for his stage productions.<sup>201</sup> The art of both men influenced Shostakovich, who translated the aesthetic into music. Solomon Volkov has claimed that during his childhood, Shostakovich was a frequent guest of Kustodiev, and while this source is often dubious, this claim is almost certainly true.<sup>202</sup> Kustodiev drew multiple

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<sup>197</sup> Some contemporaries of Shchedrin did point this out as well, though without without analysing the components. See I. Likhacheva, *Opera 'Mertvye dushi' R. Shchedrina: putevoditel* (Moscow: Sovetskii kompozitor, 1981), 4.

<sup>198</sup> Some frequently cited examples include Michael Steig, 'Defining the Grotesque: An Attempt at Synthesis', *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 29, no. 2 (1970): 253–60. Philip Thomson, *The Grotesque* (London: Routledge, 2017). Frances S. Connelly, *Modern Art and the Grotesque* (Cambridge: University Press, 2003). For the Russian context, Mikhail Bakhtin's theory of the grotesque body is relevant. See M. Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2010).

<sup>199</sup> Christian Werner Thomsen, *Das Groteske und die englische Literatur* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1977), 200.

<sup>200</sup> Ralf Remshardt, *Staging the Savage God: The Grotesque in Performance* (Carbondale, Illinois: SIU Press, 2016), 12.

<sup>201</sup> Vsevolod Meyerhold, trans. and ed. Edward Braun, *Meyerhold on Theatre* (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2014), 137-41. Sheinberg, 250.

<sup>202</sup> Dmitrii Shostakovich, ed. Solomon Volkov, *Testimony: The Memoirs of Dmitri Shostakovich* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1979), 12.

pencil sketches of Shostakovich as a child, at least one dated 1919 and one dated 1923.<sup>203</sup> Closer connections can be traced, however, between Kustodiev and Shostakovich's *Lady Macbeth of Mtsensk*: Kustodiev not only illustrated a version of Leskov's story upon which the opera is based, but also produced a series of grotesque portraits of women, including *Kupchikha s zerkalom* ('The Merchant's Wife With a Mirror', 1920); the protagonist of *Lady Macbeth* happens to be a merchant's wife.<sup>204</sup> Meyerhold's connection with the composer is already clear. Sheinberg has analysed thoroughly Shostakovich's translation of the grotesque into music in both *The Nose* and *Lady Macbeth of Mtsensk*, revealing the musical techniques he used to create 'a hybrid that combines the ludicrous with the horrifying'.<sup>205</sup>

The vibrant beginning of exploration in the musical grotesque, however, disappeared from the opera stage after the denunciation of *Lady Macbeth*: authorities made it clear that these experiments represented the opposite of Socialist Realist (and generally Communist) ideals. The next instance of the grotesque in Soviet opera would not appear for another forty years – not until *Dead Souls*. Elements of the musical grotesque permeate *Dead Souls* in ways that are inherited from Shostakovich. In *The Nose*, Shostakovich creates a grotesque aesthetic by using exaggeration and by manufacturing hyper-realism. Scene three of *The Nose* opens with vivid, realistic interpretations of the protagonist, Platon Kovalev, snoring: using onomatopoeia ('brrr') and extreme orchestration (moaning trombones and contrabassoons in the depths of their registers, solo violin in its heights performing trills and *flageolets*), the effect is ludicrous at first because of its realism, and then slightly revolting because of its exaggeration.<sup>206</sup> (See Figure 3) It is an example, however, of Shostakovich's fascination with both the grotesque and with the technical construction of speech.

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<sup>203</sup> Boris Kustodiev, 'Portrait of Dmitri Dmitrievich Shostakovich (1906-1975) as a Child', 1919 (pencil on paper). Location: Shostakovich Memorial Museum, Russia. And 'Portrait of Dmitri Dmitrievich Shostakovich (1906-1975)', 1923 (pencil on paper). Location: Shostakovich Memorial Museum, Russia.

<sup>204</sup> Caryl Emerson, 'Back to the Future', 64.

<sup>205</sup> Sheinberg, *Irony*, 207, 238-40.

<sup>206</sup> Shostakovich, *Nos*, 26-7.

95 Adagio  $\text{♩} = 48$

C-fag. *pp*

Tr-ne *(p)*

КОВАЛЕВ (просыпается, за ширмой)

Брр, брр, Брр, брр, брр...

V. no solo *p* *gliss.*  $\delta\sigma$

96

C-fag.

Tr-ne *gliss.*

Sil.

Arpa I C, E

K. Брр, брр, брр, брр. Брр, брр. Брр.

V. no solo  $\delta\sigma$

Figure 3 Hyper-realism through onomatopoeia in Shostakovich's *The Nose*

Shostakovich was also intrigued by the possibilities that lucid prose and syllables held for communication in music, such as using speech itself as percussion.<sup>207</sup> The latter ideas were inspired by members of the Futurist school (particularly Viktor Vinogradov and Boris Eikhenbaum), who emphasised the phonetic and rhythmic power of words, rather than their semantic significance.<sup>208</sup> While seemingly innocuous, including these nonsense syllables would become a gesture directly against the principles of Socialist Realism, which demanded intelligibility as first priority.<sup>209</sup> After *Lady Macbeth*, nonsense syllables were nowhere to be found in any of the other operas composed for the Bolshoi. Shchedrin reproduced a Shostakovich-esque grotesque in *Dead Souls*, however, by recovering these techniques, and

<sup>207</sup> Ibid, 14–5, 67, 92–4.

<sup>208</sup> Caryl Emerson, 'Shostakovich and the Russian Literary Tradition', in *Shostakovich and His World*, by Laurel E. Fay (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004): 183–226. 183.

<sup>209</sup> See Chapter 1.

adopted the aesthetic of the Futurists, like Shostakovich, by focusing on the rhythmic potential of empty syllables. His character Nozdrev, a landowner fond of violence and cheating at checkers, is introduced each time he appears with his own hyper-realist sounds. He announces himself by singing ‘ba, ba, ba’ at the beginning of most of his phrases in conversation with Chichikov, syllables that mean nothing, but emphasise his inability to articulate words because of his extreme drunkenness. (See Figure 4)

Чичиков и Ноздрев играют в шашки, Мижуев наблюдает за игрой. Ноздрев время от времени наливает „очень усердно“ в стаканы.

**89** НОЗДРЕВ (протирая руки)

*ff sempre*

Ба, ба, ба, ба, ба, ба, ба, ба, ба, ба, ба, ба, ба!

Archl  
*meno f*

Figure 4 Onomatopoeia in Shchedrin’s *Dead Souls*, p. 105

In addition, Shchedrin writes drunkenness into the orchestral accompaniment. Nozdrev’s ‘Aria-Portrait’ begins with a distorted march: brass and piccolos in high register blurt out an opening that is distinctly the rhythm of the beginning of a march, followed by chromatic triplets in ricochet bowing from the strings, which sound as if they are tripping and stumbling over themselves – they are the sounds of uncontrollable motion, which for Shostakovich, and then for Shchedrin, is one of the signifiers of the grotesque.<sup>210</sup> It is a march that has been stripped of its dignified character, and has been imbued with a haphazard nature – the opposite of what a march should be – that turns it into a nightmarish caricature of itself.<sup>211</sup> (See Figure 5) Though by the 1970s Shostakovich’s and Shchedrin’s operas were allowed on stage, the self-

<sup>210</sup> Sheinberg, *Irony*, 221.

<sup>211</sup> Shchedrin, *Mertvye dushi*, 105.

proclaimed Socialist Realists still avoided these techniques, undoubtedly because they considered them too absurd.



Figure 5 Nozdrev's incongruous march in *Dead Souls*, p. 105

Elements of the grotesque are highlighted further in the scene of the governor's ball. But this time, Shchedrin takes it a step further, combining the grotesque with satire: he humourizes the grotesque by critiquing the behavioural traits it insinuates. Sheinberg argues that the satirical grotesque in music must be related to a behaviour or physical property that can be derided because the object is known: this is best shown in physical manifestations like dances or marches.<sup>212</sup> The ball in the text of *Dead Souls* is a prime example of the satirical grotesque in literature. The passage of the ball demonstrates that the town of N hosts a society with a distorted view of itself: it is a thoroughly provincial backwater, but prides itself on being a cosmopolitan, sophisticated centre. The ball brings this dichotomy into relief: the dancers try to be dignified, but the author highlights their absurdity. When describing the ladies waltzing, he comments,

Each lady inwardly vowed to herself to be as charming as possible while dancing and showing in all its splendour the excellence of that which was most excellent in her. The postmaster's wife, as she waltzed, held her head to one side with such languor that it indeed gave one the feeling of something unearthly.<sup>213</sup>

<sup>212</sup> Sheinberg, *Irony*, 231.

<sup>213</sup> Gogol, *Dead Souls*, 169.

In the mazurka, rather than languor,

Heels were smashing the floor...working body and soul, and arms, and legs, pulling off such steps as no one had ever pulled off before even in a dream.<sup>214</sup>

These are all descriptions that show great effort to dance, or great affectation, but eschew the grace that should have been the goal of dances in that era. In fact, dance is so closely associated with grace in the West that whatever conflicts with this image will be grotesque.<sup>215</sup> The music is described similarly: ‘fiddles and trumpets were hacking out...[tunes]’.<sup>216</sup> There are also touches of the grotesque even before Chichikov’s arrival at the ball: a mechanical repetition of his name by those at the ball as he enters, his body being thrown from the chief of police to the health inspector to many other people in a row for embraces; the gestures have the semblance of normality, while all being infused with an element of violence which distort them.<sup>217</sup>

Shchedrin captures all of this in the music in stages: he twists the melodic structure of the dance music, and then turns the dance itself into a scene of violent chaos. The ball begins with a rousing polonaise – a dance with all of the connotations of Russian nineteenth-century nobility, which, in opera, has its most famous representation in the polonaise from Tchaikovsky’s *Eugene Onegin*. The polonaise, however, is askew. The rhythm is unmistakable, but the melody is altered so that it becomes grotesque, with accidentals added until there is nothing left of a discernible tune – a favourite technique of both Shostakovich and Mahler in creating the effect of the grotesque in dance.<sup>218</sup> (See Figure 6) The entrance of the chorus (the guests at the ball) interrupts the rhythm of the polonaise with a unison, ritualistic, off-beat rhythm where they start chanting information about Chichikov, who has not yet arrived.<sup>219</sup> (Figure 6, System 4) This mechanical, percussive repetition prefigures the violence of this

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<sup>214</sup> Ibid, 170.

<sup>215</sup> Sheinberg, *Irony*, 233.

<sup>216</sup> Gogol, *Dead Souls*, 170.

<sup>217</sup> Ibid, 163.

<sup>218</sup> Shchedrin, *Mertvye dushi*, 207. Sheinberg, *Irony*, 97.

<sup>219</sup> Ibid, 208.

## 13. Бал у Губернатора

Maestoso con moto, tempo di Polacca

Запев  
(in Orch.)

Flauti  
*ff stacc.*

V.le  
*mf legato* *cresc.*

Яркий свет.

Покупки Чичикова оживленно комментируются.  
*f ben articolato*

199  
Coro Bassi  
(in Scena)  
Ко - неч - но, да ко - неч - но, э - то так,  
*poco f non f*

Figure 6 Polonaise and mechanical entry in *Dead Souls*, p. 207

crowd. The ritualistic crowd music and the rhythms of the polonaise then intersperse, giving a sinister quality to the entire scene – it is a polonaise overlaid with obsessive muttering about a man who is about to be exposed as a fraud. The chorus and the polonaise rhythm coincide every

time the chorus sings ‘Chi-chi-kov’, reminding the listener of what has been distorted, and of the connection of the chanters to the dance. But then the moment Chichikov actually enters the room, the music dissolves into chaos: eight individual characters greet Chichikov in their own rhythms, added to the chorus, which is divided into eight separate parts.<sup>220</sup> (See Figure 7) All decorum and sophistication is lost. In addition, the rhythmic definition of the ball and the chanting is lost – the grotesque is heightened because chaos overtakes a form that is supposed to be well-defined, controlled, and dignified.

Shchedrin likely modelled his ritualistic crowd scenes, which descend into chaos, on several scenes from *The Nose*. For Shostakovich, both dance and crowds independently represented some degree of violence and tension, and together, they signified uncontrollable momentum toward chaos.<sup>221</sup> In one especially nonsensical scene, a woman selling bagels is assaulted by a group of police officers. The facts of the matter are an assault and an arrest, but the setting of the text makes the overall effect humorous: the woman switches from her relentless repetitions of *bubliki* (bagels) to singing an expressive ‘oi’ (a nonsense syllable used for surprise) against the police officers ‘a’ (another nonsense syllable). The meaning of the scene is almost lost behind the viscerally engaging rhythm and sounds of the syllables, which start to sound like something between a dance and a chant. But as the syllables are layered and pulled apart, the scene descends into unintelligibility. Shostakovich layers the choral lines so densely here with different text, that, if performed precisely according to Shostakovich’s dynamic markings and other indications, the words inevitably become a series of percussive, ritualistic sounds rather than understandable sentences. It is a progressive unravelling of sense into nonsense, which is precisely what happens in Shchedrin’s ball. (See Figures 8 and 7)

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<sup>220</sup> Ibid, 220.

<sup>221</sup> Sheinberg, *Irony*, 293.

Появляется Чичиков.  
 Più pesante, quasi Maestoso Animato (Voci)\*)

АННА ГРИГОРЬЕВНА  
 (была приятна во всех отношениях)

СОФЬЯ ИВАНОВНА  
 (просто приятна дома)

ГУБЕРНАТОРША

ПОЧТМЕЙСТЕР

ПРЕДСЕДАТЕЛЬ ПАЛАТЫ

ПРОКУРОР

ПОЛИЦЕЙМЕЙСТЕР  
 (solo)

ГУБЕРНАТОР

I  
 S.  
 II  
 I  
 A.  
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 Solo  
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 T.  
 II  
 I  
 B.  
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\*) После одновременного вступления, каждая вокальная партия — в индивидуальном темпе, но объединенном темпе оркестра.

Figure 7 The ball dissolving into chaos, *Dead Souls*, p. 219

280

Fl. picc.  
Ob.  
Cl. picc.  
Fag.  
Cor.  
Tr-ba  
Tr-ne  
T-no  
P-to  
P-ti  
Cassa

Последние воцелы отъезжающих.

1. Сударыня!	Здесь	пробудет	приятность	времени,	проведенного
2. Прощайте,	матушка,	прощайте,	матушка,	прощайте,	матушка,
3. Эх народу	навалило,	эх народу	навалило,	эх народу	навалило,
4. Эй вы, борода,	куда лезете?	Не видите:	дама.	Эй вы, борода,	
5. Батюшки,	приперли со	всех сторон!	Батюшки,	приперли со	
6. Ты что лезешь	в самое	рыло? Стой,	кляток	укражи!	Ты

Торг.  
Ой! Ой! Ой! Ой! Ой! Ой! Ой! Ой! Ой! Ой!

Пох.  
А! А! А! А! А! А! А! А! А! А!  
А! А! А! А! А! А! А! А! А! А!  
А! А! А! А! А! А! А! А! А! А!

V-ni I  
V-ni II  
V-le  
V-c.  
C-b.

8392

Figure 8 Ritualistic rhythm of the crowd leading toward chaos in *The Nose*, p. 280

After Chichikov's entry into the ballroom, and the chaotic welcome of the guests, his solo response begins with a recitative. In the epic poem, the narrator takes this moment to describe the fashions and customs of the town of N in a way which indicates that they are clearly provincial, and then concludes ironically, 'in short, everything seemed to have written

on it: No, this is no province, this is a capital, this is Paris itself!’<sup>222</sup> In the opera, Shchedrin transfers the line about Paris to Chichikov upon his entry at the ball. Without the preamble which sets up the lie, however, the irony would be lost – save for the fact that Shchedrin restores the effect with his musical characterisation both of the ball and of Chichikov.<sup>223</sup> As Chichikov sings, ‘this is indeed no province, but a capital, yes, it is Paris itself,’ his exaggerated flourishes prove ridiculous.<sup>224</sup> (See Figure 9) His absurd embellishments reach a height of a thirty-four-note flourish on a single word – to use a phrase Gogol might have employed, more turns

[Большая ария Чичикова (триумф Чичикова)]  
**214 Senza metrum, ma stesso tempo (Maestoso)**  
 ЧИЧИКОВ

Нет, э-то не гу-бер-ни-я, э-то сто-ли  
 -ца, э-то сам Париж!  
 Да э-то сам Париж...

Figure 9 Chichikov: 'This is Paris itself!' in *Dead Souls*, p. 222

<sup>222</sup> Gogol, *Dead Souls*, 165.

<sup>223</sup> Shchedrin, *Mertvye dushi*, 222. Of course, the genre also allows for the potential of restored irony not just through music, but through clever costuming. Neither the 1974 Pokrovsky production nor the 2011 Mariinsky Theatre production by Vasilii Barkhatov, however, restored this nuance. Instead of clothing the ladies of the ball in gaudy and over-the-top gowns that would suggest provincial cluelessness, and thus produce the original effect of the narrator's two-edged description, both productions opted for visually pleasing, tasteful nineteenth century reproductions.

<sup>224</sup> Shchedrin, *Mertvye dushi*, 222.

than anything that could be found in nature. It is a response so beyond what the social convention would require, that the meaning is stripped of its sincerity, and is turned into a parody of such polite greetings.<sup>225</sup> Like the postmaster's wife who leans her head to one side with far too ardent languor, Chichikov's overzealous social delicacies affirm the provincialism he denies. Next, he transitions to his aria, which turns into a waltz; with contrabasses in the extreme low register, accompanied by flutes and the harpsichord (Shchedrin's instrument paired with the devil in this opera),<sup>226</sup> it is the opposite of everything a waltz should be. It is clumsy, with opposite registers paired together, the emphases on the wrong beats, and *subito mf* and *p* dynamic markings in the middle of bars to throw it off-kilter.<sup>227</sup> It is a grotesque waltz. Like the scene with the toast to Chichikov at the beginning of the opera, however, the irony is now inverted. He is toasting in an equally ridiculous way: it is again a satire of vaunted, exaggerated praise at formal occasions, which is modelled off of the sincere examples of such fanfares which riddle the other operas of the decade.

Finally, after Chichikov is exposed as a fraud at the end of the ball, a gallop begins, and the ritualistic singing of the chorus returns, only getting faster and faster, losing control.<sup>228</sup> If for Shostakovich, the grotesque is associated most often with triple meter, uncontrollable motion, or gallop, as Sheinberg suggests, then in this scene, Shchedrin uses all of these effects in rotation.<sup>229</sup> The ball spins completely out of control and ends in a clatter. There is no other scene in a post-1953 opera that is anything like this one. In every other Soviet opera, even scenes of chaos are dignified: the riots in *The Decembrists*, the battles in *The Dawns are Quiet Here*, and the fights in *The Abduction of the Moon* are all accompanied by music that is anything but grotesque. It is in turns melancholic, sombre, or tragic, but above anything else,

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<sup>225</sup> See description of exaggeration in Sheinberg, *Irony*, 108.

<sup>226</sup> RGALI, f. 3267 o. 1, ed.kh. 15: 4.

<sup>227</sup> Shchedrin, *Mertyye dushi*, 224–5.

<sup>228</sup> *Ibid*, 242.

<sup>229</sup> Sheinberg, *Irony*, 221.

it is intelligible, and orderly. Soviet music was supposed to have one meaning that could not be missed or misinterpreted. *Dead Souls* defied this protocol with its multivalence.

There is another layer, however, to Shchedrin's satire: his treatment of the peasants. From the outset, Shchedrin's music is cast in relief against the styles of Molchanov, Taktakishvili, and indeed, his own earlier style as heard in *Not Love Alone*. Whereas *The Dawns are Quiet Here* begins with a triumphant brass fanfare, and *Not Love Alone* begins with spoken text about the collective farm followed by lilting ersatz-folk melodies, *Dead Souls* begins with a folk song, but one very different from the cheerful *chastushki* heard in his first opera. The accompaniment starts with a chromatic trichord in the low strings; it is a dissonant sound that removes the expectation of ensuing tonality – an expectation that was met by every other opera written specifically for the Bolshoi in the 1960s and 1970s.<sup>230</sup> The audience is, therefore, prepared for atonality before the two women begin to sing, and yet the soloists enter singing a version of a folk song, which seems incongruous with the instrumental accompaniment. (See Figure 10) The mix of atonality and folk was new for Shchedrin, but was a clash of styles that had roots in a number of other non-operatic works: though it would have pained Shchedrin to admit it, he may have been influenced by Denisov's *Plachi* (1966) and also Volkonsky's *Zhaloby Shchazy* (1962), both of which mix elements of twelve-tone and serial techniques with folklore.<sup>231</sup> Shchedrin's use of this in Soviet opera, however, pioneers a way for folk elements to be incorporated without shifting the musical language of the opera into another genre: his dissonant accompaniment of the vocals means that while symbolising folk music, the genre does not transform into traditional folk music. Shchedrin invokes the associations of folk – the countryside, simplicity, peasant life – while firmly twisting the genre.

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<sup>230</sup> Granted, there were not actually many operas commissioned by the Bol'shoi in these years: they consist of Shchedrin's *Not Love Alone*, Muradeli's *October*, Raukhmudov's *The Snow Queen* (a children's 'opera-ballet'), and Molcahnov's *The Dawns are Quiet Here*. There were more ballets commissioned by the Bol'shoi, however, and these also fell into more traditional categories of melody and tonality.

<sup>231</sup> See Schmelz, *Such Freedom*, 113-4; 281-2. One additional source for Shchedrin might have been Stravinsky's *Les Noces* (1923), but I came across no notes on it in his archival materials.

This is in contradistinction to *The Dawns are Quiet Here*, when several arias no longer reference popular and folk music, but breach these realms and transform into these genres by using exclusively the orchestration and forms of these genres. Shchedrin, on the other hand, sets up his peasants as a melancholy, serious, slightly distorted lot in order to later satirise not necessarily the peasants, but the ways peasants are portrayed in opera.

The image shows a musical score for the beginning of *Dead Souls*, page 5. It is divided into three parts: **Занен (in Orchestra)**, **solo\* (MEZZO SOPRANO)**, and **Piano (Orchestra)**. The tempo is **Lento assai**. The lyrics are "Не бе-лы, бе-лы сне-ги...". The score shows a vocal line with lyrics, a piano line with dynamics like *mf* and *pp*, and an orchestra line.

Figure 10 Two incongruous styles at the beginning of *Dead Souls*, p. 5

This opening establishes one of two strains that runs throughout the opera: the realm of the peasants and countryside, and the realm of the gentry and plot of the novel. From his earliest drafts, Shchedrin outlined that the plot would be driven by the arias of the landowners and interspersed with ‘musical entr’actes’ – a structure similar to Shostakovich’s *The Nose*.<sup>232</sup> As he continued to experiment with material, however, more and more quotations of folk poetry and Gogol’s mentions of the countryside clutter the margins of his scores, until finally the musical entr’actes become a fully developed parallel world to that of the action – the world of the peasants who are not portrayed in the novel. Musically, he characterises this world not just with the two folk soloists, but by taking the idea of folk music in the opera to an extreme: he replaces the violins in the orchestra with voices, a folk choir that sings only during these peasant

<sup>232</sup> See RGALI, f. 3267, o. 1, ed.kh. 17.

interludes. And yet, while the accompaniment for these interruptions in the action features sleigh bells and church bells, balalaikas, and light strings – all stereotypes of sounds of the countryside – the folk singing is ever just twisted, missing crucial elements that would make it pure folk music. Without settling into comfortable tonality or modality, a fundamental requirement of Russian folk music, the music maintains an unsettled character throughout each of these scenes. In addition, not a single one of these interludes actually ends; rather, each fades into the distance or is interrupted by the beginning of the next number, thus depriving it of the formal boundaries of song. For example, the music of the prologue fades out and is overtaken by the abrupt, *forte* beginning of the second scene, ‘Vivat, Pavel Ivanovich’.<sup>233</sup> The structure continues in this manner, with each encounter that highlights Chichikov treating people as merchandise punctuated by a scene where the voices of this ‘merchandise’ are heard.<sup>234</sup>

While the reception at the time tended to hail this two-tier system as a representation of the great pathos and truth of the Russian folk, Shchedrin’s portrayal, I would argue, actually contradicts these vaunted sympathies – it portrays the peasants ironically.<sup>235</sup> Shchedrin musically portrays his peasants in two ways untraditional for the Soviet period: first, by creating exaggerated versions that become parodies, and second, by including elements of the grotesque in characterising them. First, he uses the character Selifan as a parody. Selifan is Chichikov’s coach driver; he is a peasant, and yet works for Chichikov, and as such is the one figure who serves as a bridge – he is the only character who inhabits both the music of the gentry, and the music of the peasants. He is described as a ‘high tenor (in the Russian manner of male singing)’, but the effect is much more than simply high folk singing.<sup>236</sup> Selifan is

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<sup>233</sup> Shchedrin, *Mertyye dushi*, 9–10.

<sup>234</sup> Incidentally, this structure of the starkly contrasting scenes of peasants compared to the city-dwellers adhered well to the trends of post-war Gogol adaptation, in which it was in vogue to focus on the author’s work as a study in contradictions and conflict. See Moeller-Sally, *Gogol’s Afterlife*, 157.

<sup>235</sup> M. Cherkashina, “‘*Mertyye dushi*’ – *v partiture i na opernoi stsene*”, in *Muzyka Rossii: muzykal’noe tvorchestvo i muzykal’naiia zhizn’ respublik Russiiskoi federatsii*, ed. Elena Grosheva: 69-114. M. Tarakanov, ‘Poema Gogolia na opernoi stsene’, *Sovetskaia muzyka* 467, no. 10 (1977): 85-97

<sup>236</sup> Shchedrin, *Mertyye dushi*, 4.

thrown into the very top of physically manageable *tessitura* which inevitably sounds strained throughout the performance. Constantly at the top of his register trapped in passages of long, sustained notes, it is almost painful to listen to and to watch the tenor reach these pitches. The vocal quality serves to emphasise the awkward and unpleasant situations into which he is constantly pushed as the intermediary between two worlds. This technique likely comes from the model of Shostakovich, who first strained the *tessitura* of several characters in *The Nose*, such as the police inspector, so that the range is so high and uncomfortable that the audience experiences the voice as itself an attacking instrument.<sup>237</sup> (See Figure 11) Prokofiev employed the same device in *The Gambler*, ending the dramatic arc of the character Aleksei's argument with the German baron by having Aleksei at the strained top of his range, accompanied by heavy brass, all of which enhances the discomfort and tension of the situation.<sup>238</sup>

The image shows a musical score for a tenor part in a quartet. The top system is labeled 'КВАРТАЛЬНЫЙ' and features a vocal line with the lyrics 'Вла - стью мо - ей да - ет - ся по - ве - ле - ни - е'. The piano accompaniment is marked 'fp'. The bottom system is labeled 'Кв.' and features a vocal line with the lyrics 'из - ло - вить сей же миг се - го раз - бой - ни - ка'. The piano accompaniment is marked 'mf' and includes a 'T-tom' (tom-tom) drum part. The score is in 4/4 time and includes various musical notations such as dynamics, articulation, and a 6/4 time signature change.

Figure 11 The police inspector's high *tessitura* in *The Nose*, p. 113

<sup>237</sup> Shostakovich, *Nos*, 113–5.

<sup>238</sup> Robinson, 'Dostoevskii and Opera', 102.

But this high *tessitura* of Selifan serves as more than just a tool to emphasise discomfort. It is a parodic device. According to Sheinberg, parody is based on imitation, which it modifies ‘by the insertion of incongruous critical and/or polemical components’.<sup>239</sup> There are two incongruous elements in Selifan’s singing. The first is the extreme register, which is an imitation of a folk tonality, but an exaggeration of it which makes it sound absurd and grotesque. Compared to the trope of melodies of charming, happy peasants in every other Soviet opera of the 1950s-1970s, the raw, untrained, quality of Selifan’s voice – an undeniably folk timbre – is an arresting musical feature. Second, however, Selifan constantly interjects in scenes with phrases that sound like folk wisdom. Whereas in other Soviet operas, however, where folk anecdotes and ditties are used to comment sincerely on the action, or to show the purity of the country folk (or Communists vs. capitalists),<sup>240</sup> here, Shchedrin inserts comments which have no relevance to what is happening, and show the inadequacy of Selifan’s folk wisdom to make sense of what Chichikov is doing. For example, escaping the chaos of Sobakeivich’s house, Chichikov starts traveling down the road once again. Selifan sits atop the carriage, and sings, once again at the top of his register and *forte*, ‘oh my dear ones, as you see, Russian people don’t like very much to die their own deaths.’<sup>241</sup> (See Figure 12) It is presented as a piece of folk wisdom, accompanied by the characteristic bells and balalaikas, and yet, it is ridiculous: no people particularly like to die their own deaths, and Russians are certainly not unique in this way. Both the register and foolishness are Shchedrin’s ways of making ridiculous the idealised role of peasant wisdom and purity in Soviet opera. This interpretation diverges from how contemporaneous critics read the inclusion of folk music. M. Tarakanov argued, for instance, that the goal of the folk stylisation was to show ‘Russian song as a symbol of truth, of the real Russia’, and that the two planes would expose Russia as ‘true, positive’, and show the ‘moral

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<sup>239</sup> Sheinberg, *Irony*, 141.

<sup>240</sup> See Chapter 1 for examples of the *chastushki* in *Not Love Alone*, or the couplets in *Polovod’e*. Or consider the folk choruses from *The Decembrists* and the *Dawns are Quiet Here*.

<sup>241</sup> Shchedrin, *Mertvye dushi*, 177.



## Compositional Process

Politics and influences aside, it is worth examining the compositional process of this opera which was so unusual for its decade. Like Shostakovich and Prokofiev, Shchedrin began his work on the opera with the text rather than the music; in his drafts, all of the words are literally cut and pasted from the novel.<sup>243</sup> His early drafts and sketches reveal how seriously he took the duty of faithfulness to Gogol's text, and how he wrestled with every decision that would constitute a digression. A substantial early draft of the libretto in Shchedrin's archive is composed of a stack of loose-leaf sheets of A4 paper with pieces of the novel snipped out and glued onto the pages with various annotations in pen.<sup>244</sup> In this version, Shchedrin sketched out a structure built of scenes that revolved around each of the landowners whom Chichikov visits.<sup>245</sup> The opera would begin with a prologue, followed by scenes with each of the landowners, interspersed with musical entr'actes, and concluding with an epilogue.<sup>246</sup> Here he included much more text than in the final libretto, pasting in all of the material he thought could be relevant to each character.<sup>247</sup>

What these drafts reveal is how Shchedrin's music originated from the flow of the prose, a technique of composition that was likely inspired Prokofiev's *The Gambler*.<sup>248</sup> Shchedrin opted for angular setting of unrhymed words, fitting the music to the flow of text, in order to deliver maximum semantic meaning quickly without any repetition, and without any attempt to conform to poetic metre (still expected of contemporary Soviet opera composers, if Taktakishvili and Molchanov serve as examples), which is why the selection of text had to come first. With one note per syllable, and the musical emphases falling where they would in

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<sup>243</sup> RGALI, f. 3267 o. 1, ed.kh. 266.

<sup>244</sup> Ibid.

<sup>245</sup> Ibid.

<sup>246</sup> Ibid, 8-11.

<sup>247</sup> Ibid.

<sup>248</sup> It is worth noting, however, that Shchedrin was very interested in the works of Alban Berg during this period as well, as I demonstrate in Chapter 3, and it is therefore likely that *Wozzeck* was also an influence on *Dead Souls*. Claude Debussy's *Pelléas et Mélisande* could also have been an influence, though I have found less evidence that Shchedrin was interested in this composer.

speech, the brisk staccato texture often eschews a discernible melody and sounds almost like aggravated speaking rather than singing. (See Figure 13) This technique is one that Prokofiev

Figure 13 Korobochka's speech-like singing in *Dead Souls*, p. 89

developed consciously during his work on *The Gambler*, as he expressed while working on the libretto: ‘the convention of writing operas on rhymed texts is a completely absurd convention. In this case, Dostoevsky's prose is clearer, more sharp and more convincing than any verse...’<sup>249</sup> In accordance with this philosophy, Prokofiev matched each character with different melodic fragments and *tessitura* in order to mimic the way they speak, not the way they feel. He cast speech patterns into relief by stylising the words – just as Shchedrin would do, although the latter did this more by means of matching instruments with characters than by matching melodic fragments.<sup>250</sup> The similarity of Shchedrin’s text-setting to Prokofiev’s is apparent in this example from *The Gambler*, where the character Aleksei sings in a manner which captures what the words might have sounded like spoken. (See Figure 14) The music also adds to the level of pomposity implied in this character in the Dostoevsky, just as Shchedrin’s rendition of the voice of the character Korobochka resounds with overwrought pessimism. The prominence of the meaning over its artistic delivery is, while not a new

<sup>249</sup> Robinson, 'Dostoevskii and Opera', 99.

<sup>250</sup> RGALI, f. 3267, o. 1, ed.kh. 15: 4.

technique in the 1970s, a significant departure from expectations for contemporary Soviet compositions.

141 Un poco meno mosso (Andante scherzando)

Ал.  
Al.

Мне е - ще в Бер - ли - не за - па - ло ву - хо  
A Ber - lin, dé - jà, leur af - freux "Ja - wohl" me  
Da - mals in Ber - lin hat mir schon das Ohr be -

э - то от - вра - титель - но - е "Ja - wohl!" Когда я встре - тил - ся  
dé - ohi - rait les deux o - reil - les. "Ja - wohl!" Si - tôt que je les vis  
- lei - digt die - ses wi - der - li - che "Ja - wohl!" Und da ich ih - nen be -

Celli  
p espress. mf p f p

Figure 14 Aleksei's speech-like singing in *The Gambler*, p. 74

After starting with the building blocks of text, Shchedrin continued by constructing units of meaning separately before then assembling them. One early sketchbook of manuscript paper explores musical material for the opera. There are no lyrics, and no mention of characters. Rather, the sketches of material develop according to scales of intensity. For example, in one section, he includes some basic melodic motifs sketched across the top line, and then below, in two bar segments, he writes which instruments will be added: 'vlc; + I fg; + I cl; + II fg; + II cl; + 2 ob.'<sup>251</sup> He sketched out how instruments would gradually be added, and what the texture of sound would be even before he had noted down any of the precise melodic or harmonic material.

<sup>251</sup> RGALI, f. 3267 o. 1 ed.kh. 16: 7.

Additionally, he was obsessed from the beginning with pairing characters and instruments.<sup>252</sup> As he revealed in the programme notes for the premiere of the opera, he was eager for the entire opera to flow from the music, and ‘to employ all of the available resources of the operatic genre’.<sup>253</sup> With this in mind, his conception of capturing Gogol’s vivid characterisations was to create what he called ‘aria-portraits’ for each of the soloists. At the beginning of a set of sketches dated 1973-1975, Shchedrin detailed the marriage of characters to specific instruments and musical motifs.<sup>254</sup> Though not the final version, as there are a number of changes between this version and the published one, it is indicative of how integral instrument pairings were for Shchedrin.<sup>255</sup> He considered an electric guitar as the instrument for Nozdrev, which was probably an influence from Schnittke (though he eventually settled on the French horn, adding the electric guitar occasionally as an emphasis). Sobakeivich is paired with the bassoon and basses, Manilov with the flute, and he even designated an instrument for a character who never appears explicitly in the poem, but of whom Gogol hints: the devil. Shchedrin noted that particularly in conversations about dead souls, the cembalo would represent the voice of the devil interfering in Chichikov’s conscience.<sup>256</sup>

Many of these instrument pairings are significant, as they weave into a rich tapestry of allusion in Russian opera. In Rimsky-Korsakov’s operas, for example, the flute is often paired with the mystical realm, or a pure, holy character (examples include the flute’s pairing with Fevronia in his opera *The Invisible City of Kitezh and the Maiden Fevronia*). Manilov’s representation by the flute, then, gives him moral weight: it suggests that he is holier than Chichikov, and his questioning of Chichikov’s desire to buy dead souls takes on a spiritual dimension. This is reinforced by the music itself. Manilov’s flute melody is delicate and unsure;

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<sup>252</sup> See RGALI, f. 3267 o. 1, ed.kh. 15

<sup>253</sup> RGALI, f. 648, o. 19, ed.kh. 209: 11.

<sup>254</sup> See RGALI, f. 3267, o. 1, ed.kh. 15.

<sup>255</sup> Ibid, 4.

<sup>256</sup> Ibid, 34-5.

it wanders up in fluttering octaves, not finding a resolution on any particular tone. (See Figure 15) The bassoon also bears a host of associations: the most relevant one is Shostakovich's use



Figure 15 Manilov's leitmotif, *Dead Souls*, p. 53

of the bassoon in *Katerina Izmailova*. This opera, Shostakovich's 1962 revision of *Lady Macbeth*, fascinated Shchedrin, as a notebook of his study of it in his archive confirms.<sup>257</sup> In *Katerina*, the bassoon serves as the accompanying instrument for Boris Timofeiovich, the protagonist's father-in-law. Boris, a deep bass, like Shchedrin's Sobakeivich, is at the same time a humorous character who cannot cease singing about mushrooms, and also a sinister one, as his oppression of his daughter-in-law Katerina is one of the factors which leads to her outburst of violence and rebellion. Sobakeivich, therefore, takes on the association of humorous and sinister in equal measure. Curiously, unlike the direct associations of Sobakeivich and Manilov, the protagonist is the only named character who is not associated with a particular instrument. Instead, Chichikov adjusts his style to his interlocutor. Similar to the protagonist in Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart's *Don Giovanni* and Berg's *Lulu*, the operatic Chichikov is a chameleon who melds musically with his conversations just like Gogol's Chichikov matches his speech patterns to conform to his conversation partners.

<sup>257</sup> See his full notebook of observations in RGALI, f. 3267, o. 2, ed.kh. 31.

## Conclusion

Finally, however, one of the oddest features of this opera is that though it is ironic to its core, it is not particularly funny. I have attended eight performances of this opera, and have never yet heard laughter from the audience. It is witty but without necessarily becoming humorous, or provoking laughter, just as Shostakovich's Seventh Symphony or Second Piano Trio can be viewed as ironic<sup>258</sup> without being humorous. But this, in itself, is strange. It is not funny despite a text which radiates humour (using the light-hearted Rossini as a model), and a composer who often packs humour into his pieces.<sup>259</sup> Just a few examples of his more jovial works include *Konek-gorbunok* (*The Little Humpbacked Horse*), with its 'playful comedy' and awkward, raucous melodies that accompany the Tsar, *Not Love Alone*, with the amusing scene of the out-of-tune, on-stage band, and *Ozornye chastushki* (*Naughty Limericks*) with its incessant, twisted references to folk melodies which frequently leave audience members chuckling.<sup>260</sup> And indeed, a curious little piece in his archives reinforces the suspicion that he could have, had he chosen, made this opera more of a tribute to Gogol's humour than a lament about the intractability of Russia. The piece is called 'PS k opere RK Shchedrina "Mertvye dushi" dlia trekh solistov' ('PS to RK Shchedrin's opera *Dead Souls* for three soloists').

Performed only once, in a concert four days after the premiere, this 'PS' is written in the style of *Dead Souls*, as if the opera itself were an event in the town of N that is to be gossiped about.<sup>261</sup> The two busybodies, Sofia Ivanovna and Anna Grigorievna, begin the piece exactly the same way as they do the gossip scene in the full opera: by exclaiming each other's

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<sup>258</sup> Sheinberg, *Irony*, 97.

<sup>259</sup> For descriptions of humour and satire in Shchedrin's work, but a summary of press reception that does *not* find humour in *Dead Souls*, see Likhacheva, *Opera 'Mertvye dushi'*.

<sup>260</sup> Numerous authors have commented on his propensity for musical comedy. See, for example, T.N. Levaia, ed., *Istoriia otechestvennoi muzyki vtoroi poloviny xx veka* (St Petersburg: Kompozitor, 2005), 122. This last observation comes from personal experience.

<sup>261</sup> RGALI, f. 3267 o. 1 ed.kh. 378.

names in brief staccato outbursts, and then proceeding to babble about the opera itself.<sup>262</sup> Shchedrin then gives an instruction for Sofia to ‘whisper into her ear’ and Sofia sings onomatopoeia of a-m-a-m while Anna exclaims ‘Who is Shchedrin? Rodion? He gave birth to dead souls?! M...’<sup>263</sup> Sofia replies ‘oh no, they’re not dead, not dead.’<sup>264</sup> Just like in Gogol’s original, Anna takes literally what she should not have, and responds to Sofia by wondering at this Shchedrin who gave birth to dead souls. Sofia then reassures her not by explaining that she meant *Dead Souls* the epic poem, which Shchedrin turned into an opera, but by singing, ‘don’t worry, they’re not really dead.’<sup>265</sup> This becomes a multi-layered satire of the opinions voiced about the opera itself by its critics, who, Shchedrin intimates, probably did not understand it. The irony is more light-hearted and more straightforward, however, than the complex layers found within the context of the opera. It is likely that this produced a more humorous effect, and proves that Shchedrin knew how to turn irony into comedy, but also knew how to keep the two separate.

Instead of a Rossini-like comedy, or the type of levity in the ‘PS’, the pessimism of the opera is suggested by the undertones of the grotesque throughout the music, and sealed by the text Shchedrin selected for the final scene. The brief conversation that concludes the opera is found in the opening paragraph of the epic poem. As Chichikov rides into the town of N for the first time, two peasants near the inn comment on his equipage: ‘Hey! Look at that wheel? Do you suppose it could make it all the way to Moscow, if it needed to?’<sup>266</sup> The other peasant concludes it might make it as far as Moscow, but certainly not as far as Kazan.<sup>267</sup> And with that, the story proceeds with a description of Chichikov’s arrival at the inn. In the context of

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<sup>262</sup> Ibid, 1.

<sup>263</sup> Ibid.

<sup>264</sup> Ibid.

<sup>265</sup> Ibid.

<sup>266</sup> RGALI, f. 3267 o. 1, ed.kh. 266: 8.

<sup>267</sup> Though many English versions translate *koleso* as carriage, I have translated this as ‘wheel’ for two reasons: first, when directly referring to Chichikov’s carriage, the word *brichka* is used, not *koleso*. Second, in both the Pokrovsky and the Stepanyuk stagings of this opera, these directors chose to highlight the significance of the wheel itself, not the wheel as a synecdoche for the carriage.

the beginning of the novel, these off-hand remarks seem inconsequential; and indeed, Shchedrin considered the wheel passage for the prologue, which would have framed the remarks casually.<sup>268</sup> Thinking twice about this, however, he later circled this passage which he had denoted for the opening and wrote ‘NB: finale opera!’<sup>269</sup>

Coming at the end of the opera and in an entirely different context, this scene gives new significance. In Shchedrin’s version, this number takes place immediately after Chichikov has fled the town of N after being found out and accused of attempting to abduct the governor’s daughter. As the tableau shifts from city to country, the sounds of sleigh bells and peasants singing their lilting folk song emerge.<sup>270</sup> Selifan the coachman, singing at the top of his register once again, tries to get the attention of the peasants, presumably to ask directions. As Chichikov’s carriage speeds through the countryside, the peasant men interject about the suitability of the wheel, and it is their words which conclude the opera: ‘*ne doedet*’ (it won’t make it’), while the peasants are still heard in the background, singing their folk song ever softer and fading into silence. Against this backdrop, the wheel is a symbol of Russia, or at least of the ambitious, city-dwelling Russians, who will clearly not lead the country to its destination.

It is striking that it is the defective wheel that ends this opera, and not the triumphant troika. It is therefore not only the modernist ‘how’ of this opera (as Taruskin might phrase it),<sup>271</sup> but also the ‘what’ which is surprising. The ending suggests an irresolvable problem, something that was simply not acceptable in Soviet ideology. Compared to the heroic spectacle of Molchanov’s *The Dawns are Quiet* here, or even *The Nose*, where Shostakovich capitalised on the levity of Gogol, the gloom strikes the greatest contrast with the other operas of the decade – and with the modernist operas of the 1920s. Shchedrin chose pathos over pleasantries,

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<sup>268</sup> RGALI, f. 3267, o. 2 ed.kh. 32: 2.

<sup>269</sup> Ibid.

<sup>270</sup> Shchedrin, *Mertyye dushi*, 382.

<sup>271</sup> Taruskin, ‘Molchanov’s’, 111.

and through unhumorous irony, his adapted version of Gogol's tale satirises the more ridiculous aspects of Soviet opera, but perhaps it also gives a reading of Shchedrin's feeling about Russia and its future. It is a pessimistic reading, one steeped in a sense that nothing about the unpromising trajectory would ultimately change. This sentiment, combined with the modernist-influenced music, puts *Dead Souls* in a category of its own: it is neither a revival, nor an optimistic, contemporary-themed opera. Rather, it is an opera reveals the challenges of living through an artistically depressed – if not entirely economically stagnant – decade. It displays the challenges of creating art in an era of ennui.

## Chapter 3

### Opera After Freedom: *Lolita* as a Parable for Perestroika

Rodion Shchedrin began writing his third opera, *Lolita*, in 1989. It was his first foreign opera commission. As he tells the story, he received a call one day in his apartment on Tverskaia Street, Moscow from his friend Mstislav Rostropovich. Newly elected music director of the Paris Opera, Rostropovich wanted to impress France with a new opera on a distinctly Russian theme by a Russian composer, and asked Shchedrin to propose some ideas. Shchedrin suggested several themes, but Rostropovich immediately leapt at *Lolita* by Vladimir Nabokov: they agreed this was the epitome of Russian novels – never mind that it was set in post-war America and written in English. The year was 1989, and it was time for a new kind of opera, and a new kind of Russia.<sup>1</sup> But all did not go as planned. The two Soviet musicians overlooked a mundane but indispensable convention of Western capitalist countries: artists' rights. Only a few months before the scheduled premiere, the production ground to a halt when Rostropovich received a letter from Nabokov's son Dmitry. He was shocked to have heard second-hand about the opera, and incredulous that no one had inquired about the rights, which he was unable to grant since he had sold them to Stanley Kubrick for his 1962 film. In spite of himself and the obstacles, Dmitry was taken with the idea of *Lolita* the opera – possibly because he was a singer himself – and the three men set out on a quest to beat Hollywood together.<sup>2</sup> But over the course of their five-year battle until the work was granted rights for its premiere, the world transformed into an entirely different landscape.

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<sup>1</sup> Rodion Shchedrin, interview with author, 27 March 2018.

<sup>2</sup> RGALI, f. 3267, o. 3, ed.kh. 110 : 4-5

By the time of *Lolita*'s premiere, the Soviet Union was no more; what Shchedrin began writing as a Soviet composer in Moscow, he finished as a *Russian émigré* composer in Munich. And what he intended as an opera in Russian for a French audience was first heard in Swedish at the Royal Stockholm Opera. Ultimately, however, there were two surprises even more substantial than a *Lolita* sung in Swedish: the first would be that the musical inspiration for Perestroika would be found in the Second Viennese School, particularly Alban Berg. Second would be the fact that Shchedrin reinterpreted this scandalous novel about a paedophile into a completely different form: a biblical parable for his own disintegrating nation. This unusual piece of music – and its eccentric production history – reveals the struggle of a Soviet composer trying to navigate one of the most complex societal and economic restructurings of modern history: the breakup of the Soviet Union. The convoluted history of the opera's birth highlights that the story of *Lolita* is one of transition. It is an opera caught between the fault lines of Soviet and Russian, East and West, communist and capitalist, and secular and religious. I will examine how *Lolita* straddles each of the aforementioned transitions to paint a richer picture of the world as it affected Soviet opera in 1989.

### **Between Communist and Capitalist: the 1980s and new frontiers for composers**

The first half of the 1980s was marked by continued economic stagnation and popular discontent, which many politicians believed signified impending crisis.<sup>3</sup> The economy had become remarkably inefficient: it produced the wrong things, and it produced them badly.<sup>4</sup> By 1990, the Soviet Union produced nearly twice as many lathes as the United States and four times as many bulldozers, but only one fiftieth the number of pairs of women's underwear; this

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<sup>3</sup> Daniel Treisman, *The Return: Russia's Journey from Gorbachev to Medvedev* (New York and London: Free Press, 2010), 24.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*

was symbolic of the many simple but necessary consumer goods that it became difficult to obtain.<sup>5</sup> The beginning of the decade also witnessed political instability. In 1982, Iurii Andropov replaced Leonid Brezhnev after the latter's death, but Andropov himself was soon incapacitated and replaced by Konstantin Chernenko. Chernenko, who in turn had emphysema, was finally replaced by Mikhail Gorbachev in 1985, who brought with him hopes of reforming the country that seemed on the brink of economic failure and political upheaval.

Both inspiration and funding waned in Russian theatres at this time as well. Whereas a hunger for new repertoire had prompted Soviet composers to create (at least a few) fresh operas in the previous decade,<sup>6</sup> the search for world premieres abated until the 2000s. During the 1980s, the obsession with Soviet operas was supplanted by a different preoccupation: saving what was perceived as the rapidly declining standard of the Bolshoi's core performance repertoire. In a Bolshoi Theatre planning meeting for the period 1981-1985, officials noted that their top priority was to raise the quality of their most important repertoire pieces, those 'that are our absolute best productions and preserve their form over time.'<sup>7</sup> They blamed the myriad new productions on contemporary themes of the last decade for diverting their attention and compromising the standards of the classics; they determined to embark only on less ambitious (and more financially viable) premieres for the foreseeable future.<sup>8</sup> Without much ceremony, they elected to remove three productions that had been the hardest-won victories of Soviet opera in the previous decade: Otar Taktakishvili's *Pokhishchenie luny* (*The Abduction of the Moon*), Kiril Molchanov's *Zori zdes' tikhie* (*The Dawns are Quiet Here*), Eduard Lazarev's *Revoliutsiei prizvannyi* (*Summoned by the Revolution*).<sup>9</sup> Over this entire five-year period there was not a single world premiere of an opera, and the new productions included only revivals

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<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> See Chapter 2.

<sup>7</sup> RGALI, f. 648, o. 19, ed.kh. 356: 9.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid, 5, 9.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid, 11.

of operas that had once been in the repertoire.<sup>10</sup> It was not an adventurous moment for opera in the Soviet Union. Though no one in the theatre could have known it at the time, the final world premiere of an opera at the Bolshoi Theatre during the Soviet era would be *Summoned by the Revolution* in 1979; the penultimate would be Shchedrin's *Mertvye dushi* (*Dead Souls*) in 1977, for which he ultimately won the Lenin Prize in 1984.<sup>11</sup> The next premiere would not take place until 2005 with Leonid Desiatnikov's *Deti Rosentalia* (*The Children of Rosenthal*), an event I discuss in Chapter 4.<sup>12</sup>

Shchedrin would almost certainly have been privy to this planning information and the proclivities of the theatre given both his close personal connections with members of the theatre's committees, his wife's status as a prima ballerina there, and because of his position as the Secretary of the Board of the Union of Composers USSR from 1962, and Chairman of the Union of Composers of the RSFSR from 1973 to 1990. He could not have been hopeful about writing operas that could be mounted in this theatre, at least in the near future. The 1980s, therefore, became the decade when he and other enterprising composers began to look outward and find their footing abroad. Shchedrin was one of the first to become successful this way. In only ten years, from 1982 until the collapse of the Soviet Union, Shchedrin would have

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<sup>10</sup> RGALI, f. 648, o. 19, ed.kh. 351: 1; f. 648, o. 19, ed.kh. 363: 1; f. 648, o. 19, ed.kh. 373: 4; f. 648, o. 19, ed.kh. 373: 4. In chorological order, these are the revivals that the theatre staged during these years: Giuseppe Verdi's *Un ballo in Maschera*, Sergei Prokofiev's *Voina i mir* (*War and Peace*), Dmitri Shostakovich's *Katerina Izmailova*, Prokofiev's *Obruchenie v monastyre* (*Betrothal in a Monastery*), Christoph Willibald Gluck's *Iphigénie en Tauride*, Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov's *Skazane o nevidimom grade Kitezhe i o deve Fevronii* (*The Tale of the Invisible City of Kitezh and the Maiden Fevronia*), Ruggero Leoncavallo's *Pagliacci*, Prokofiev's *Povest' o nastoiashchem cheloveke* (*The Story of a Real Man*), and Pietro Mascagni's *Cavalleria rusticana*.

<sup>11</sup> See RGALI, f. 648, o. 19, ed.kh. 339; f. 648, o.19, ed.kh. 344: 7-8; f. 648, o. 19, ed.kh. 351: 1; f. 648, o. 19, ed.kh. 363: 1; f. 648, o. 19, ed.kh. 373: 4.

I have these repertoire statistics and plans through 1985. For the remaining years of Perestroika, I rely on the fact that there are no records of reviews or news reports of world premieres, and *The Children of Rosenthal* is listed as the first world premiere at the Bolshoi since 1979 according to *Opera News*. See 'The Children of Rosenthal', 27.03.2005, <https://www.operanews.com/operanews/review/review.aspx?id=725&issueID=48&archive=true>. Accessed 02.05.2020.

<sup>12</sup> RGALI, f. 648, o. 19, ed.kh. 351: 1; f. 648, o. 19, ed.kh. 363: 1; f. 648, o. 19, ed.kh. 373: 4; f. 648, o. 19, ed.kh. 373: 4. The exact repertoire list for the 1981-1982 season is missing. However, there is no evidence in supporting financial or planning documents (or in subsequent seasons) that there were any premieres of new operas in that season.

orchestral works premiered by the Washington National Symphony Orchestra ('*Stikhira* for the Millennium of the Christianisation of Russia' for symphony orchestra, 1988), the Chicago Symphony Orchestra (Concerto for Orchestra No. 3, 'Old Russian Circus Music', 1989), the Tokyo Symphony Orchestra (Concerto for Orchestra No. 4, '*Khorovody*', 1989), Musical Factory Hori Productions Inc. in Japan (*Nina and the Twelve Months*, 1988), and three ballets and an opera would be shown at a festival in Boston dedicated in part to his work in 1988 (*Anna Karenina*, *Dama s sobachkoi* [*Lady with a Lapdog*], *Chaika* [*The Seagull*], and *Dead Souls*).<sup>13</sup>

One of Shchedrin's first foreign successes came because he was finally able to make contact with a foreign publishing agency and gain an individual contract not mediated by the state. Not since the 1920s had such an option been possible.<sup>14</sup> In the early 1920s, representatives from Universal Edition began to make contact with Soviet composers, and from 1924-1929, was publishing works of thirteen Soviet composers abroad.<sup>15</sup> The end of this brief opportunity for independent representation came when the state music publisher, *Muzsektor gosizdat*, coerced Universal Edition into signing a joint contract which then allowed *gosizdat* to control the contact between Universal and the composers; when even this contract collapsed due to distribution disagreements at the end of 1932, Universal was not able to find another mediating institution.<sup>16</sup> By the 1970s, however, representatives from various publishing agencies were returning to Moscow to try their hand at recruiting talented musicians outside of the state apparatus. This is what happened at the premiere of the ballet *The Seagull* in 1980, composed by Shchedrin and choreographed and danced by his wife, Maya Plisetskaya. Though

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<sup>13</sup> For more about the Boston festival, see '65 Bolshoi Dancers Coming to Boston', *The New York Times*, 29.02.1988 and William H. Honan, 'Constructive Chaos at a Bit-Power Arts Feast', *The New York Times*, 02.04.1988.

<sup>14</sup> Olesya Bobrik, *Venskoe izdatelstvo 'Universal Edition' i muzykanty iz sovetskoi Rossii* (Moscow: Federal'noe agentstvo po kul'ture i kinematografii Rossiiskoi Federatsii, Gosudarstvenii institut iskusstvovedeniia, 2007), 8.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, 11, 14.

a very Russian endeavour, based on a story by Anton Chekov and birthed in the Bolshoi Theatre, the production would create international ripples for Shchedrin. A representative from the American music publishing house of Schirmer was in attendance, and immediately after the performance approached Shchedrin about adapting the music for a suite.<sup>17</sup> It was no accident that the representative appeared, as Schirmer had had their eyes on Shchedrin at least as early as February 1975, when they had written to him requesting samples of his music since they were considering new contemporary scores to publish (in 1975, however, Shchedrin was in the middle of composing *Dead Souls*, and prospects in the Soviet Union still seemed brighter than they would five years later).<sup>18</sup> Other Soviet artists were being gradually discovered by similar means, such as Galina Ustol'vskaja, who was scouted by the head of Sikorski publishing house around the same time, or Arvo Pärt, who was discovered by chance by a German record producer who happened to catch part of a broadcast of his *Tabula rasa* around 1980.<sup>19</sup>

Shchedrin immediately accepted the offer from Schirmer, and not only did the Copyright Bureau of the Soviet Union bless the agreement, but the government allowed him to travel to New York to witness the premiere at Carnegie Hall in 1986 – a far cry, admits Shchedrin himself, from the political climate in 1968, when the authorities forbade him from traveling to the United States to be present for the premiere of his First Concerto for Orchestra, which Leonard Bernstein had commissioned.<sup>20</sup> To add insult to injury in the case of 1968, Shchedrin was barred from even procuring a recording of the premiere, since, according to the manager of the New York Philharmonic, ‘full commercial recording fees’ were not paid, though he assured Shchedrin that Bernstein was pleased and the orchestra had played ‘superbly’.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> Rodion Konstantinovich Shchedrin, *Autobiographical Memories* (Mainz: Schott, 2012), 166.

<sup>18</sup> RGALI, f 3267, op. 1, ed.kh. 345: 21.

<sup>19</sup> Tim Rutherford-Johnson, *Music After the Fall: Modern Composition and Culture since 1989* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2017), 11, 31.

<sup>20</sup> Shchedrin, *Memories*, 167.

<sup>21</sup> RGALI, f. 3267, o. 1, ed.kh. 345: 5.

But 1986 was a new cultural moment. The Cold War had ended. Gorbachev's monumental reforms had begun: Glasnost, which encouraged more freedom of the press and information, and Perestroika, economic reorganisation.<sup>22</sup> In addition, cultural exchange with the West – and especially America – had become more stylish than ever.<sup>23</sup> These gusts of change wafted favourably on Shchedrin's first trip to the United States for a commissioned work, and as he arrived in New York to attend the premiere of his *Seagull Suite* at Carnegie Hall, the press hailed him with enthusiasm. An article in New York's *Daily World*, published 2 January 1986, recognised him as the first Soviet cultural figure to travel to the US since the Gorbachev-Reagan cultural exchange agreement in Geneva, and stressed his importance among contemporary composers.<sup>24</sup> *The New York Times* also praised his work: dubbing him the successor of Shostakovich, they made a particular point that the suite was neither serial nor inspired by the 'new simplicity', rather, it was 'internal' and inspired by Bach and ancient Russian tradition.<sup>25</sup> The thaw in attitude in American artistic circles toward Soviet composers was certainly benefiting Shchedrin.

One success led to another: after the premiere of the *Seagull Suite* at Carnegie Hall, the director of the Boston Opera Company, Sarah Caldwell, reached out to Shchedrin. According to Shchedrin's account, Caldwell was eager to organise a festival of his music in Boston the following year.<sup>26</sup> Shchedrin leapt at the idea, and asked her to try, but admitted his concern that the Ministry of Culture of the Soviet Union would not allow a single-composer festival.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> Treisman, *The Return*, 16.

<sup>23</sup> These sentiments are perhaps best captured in oral histories and memoirs. See Svetlana Aleksievich, *Vremia sekond khënd* (Moscow: Vremia, 2016). Vladimir Pozner, *Eyewitness: A Personal Account of the Unravelling of the Soviet Union* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1992). For scholarly accounts, see Eleonory Gilburd, *To See Paris and Die: The Soviet Lives of Western Culture* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2018). For a background in late socialist cultural exchange under Khrushchev, Rósa Magnúsdóttir, *Enemy Number One: The United States of America in Soviet Ideology and Propaganda, 1945-1959* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), esp. 123-41.

<sup>24</sup> RGALI f. 3267, o. 1, ed.kh. 345: 32; This was a clipping from *Daily World* in Shchedrin's archive.

<sup>25</sup> RGALI f. 3267, o. 1, ed.kh. 345: 31. See Bernard Holland, 'Russian Composer in New York', *The New York Times*, 13.01.1986.

<sup>26</sup> Shchedrin, *Memories*, 168.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid*, 169.

Valentina Kholopova, in her book *Put' po tsentru: kompozitor Rodion Shchedrin*, repeats this account, and claims the Minister of Culture, Vasilii Zakharov, refused Caldwell's request, which led to a festival including multiple Soviet composers.<sup>28</sup> While the invitation to Shchedrin to be featured in the United States was, indeed, a symbol of the significance and growth of his reputation and career, it appears he overplayed the nature of the request in his memoirs: there is no evidence other than Shchedrin's word that Caldwell's initial plan was to feature only Shchedrin. In fact, introductory letters to the Minister of Culture suggest that it was meant to be a broader festival of Russian and Soviet music all along.<sup>29</sup> Perhaps Caldwell changed her approach in the meeting and advocated for a Shchedrin-only festival once granted an audience, but it is more likely that this is a retrospective inflation of his own importance. Shchedrin was not yet the undisputed star of Russian music that he has since become in the era of Vladimir Putin (at the time, the undisputed star was Schnittke).<sup>30</sup> And yet, regardless of the original intent of the festival, it became a significant launching point for Shchedrin's international career by bolstering both his connections and renown.

Further evidence of Shchedrin's hunger for international exposure is illustrated by his acceptance of his most eclectic commission: a Japanese musical based on a Russian fairy tale. Shortly after his return from Boston, a delegation from Musical Factory Hori Productions Inc., in Tokyo, approached the composer. The representatives surprised him by explaining that a particular tale of Russian folklorist Samuel Marshak, 'Nina and the Twelve Months', was wildly popular in Japan – so much so that when it was published in Japanese as 'The Forest is Alive', it was reprinted thirty-six times.<sup>31</sup> They envisioned adapting the tale into a 'family

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<sup>28</sup> V. N. Kholopova and Rodion Konstantinovich Shchedrin, *Put' Po Tsentru: Kompozitor Rodion Shchedrin* (Moskva: Kompozitor, 2000), 101.

<sup>29</sup> RGALI, f. 3267, o. 1, ed.kh. 345: 49. 5.

<sup>30</sup> For more on Schnittke's prominence in this period, see Peter Schmelz, 'Selling Schnittke: Late Soviet Censorship and the Cold War Marketplace' in *The Oxford Handbook of Music Censorship*, ed. Patricia Hall (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017): 413-46. Esp. 423-7.

<sup>31</sup> RGALI f. 3267, o. 1, ed.kh. 371: 126.

musical' with music by an 'internationally prominent Russian composer.'<sup>32</sup> And in addition to the various vocal demands on the composer, they stipulated that there would be a ballet as well, and not just any ballet:

The opening number will be a classical-ballet sequence with an authentic classical music, by the STEPDAUGHTER and by the animals in the forest. The number, which will take approximately 6 or 7 minutes, will be created by the best ballet dancers, choreographer and composer of the world. It will be so artistic as if it were an independent ballet work.<sup>33</sup>

True to their word, the organisers approached the chief designer of the Bolshoi Theatre, Valerii Leventhal, and the ballet master Igor Chernushov to realise this goal.<sup>34</sup> After verifying that their seemingly preposterous proposal was, indeed, serious, Shchedrin recalls that he accepted because he found the challenge intriguing, but also because of the favourable financial offer and the allure of overseas travel. The project allowed him to spend two months in Japan, where he was treated handsomely, and the company even paid to bring his wife, Plisetskaya, to the premiere.<sup>35</sup>

*Nina and the Twelve Months* drew attention to Shchedrin in Japan, and commissions continued to flow toward him from that direction over the next two decades. In 1988 the Japanese requested a trio from Shchedrin for flute, oboe, and clarinet, and more significantly, in 1989, the Tokyo Symphony Orchestra commissioned his Fourth Concerto for Orchestra, which was premiered later that year. If the ripple effect of *Nina* continued to bring him work in the East, however, the ripple effect from Boston continued to bring him work in the West. In 1989, Lorin Maazel and the Chicago Symphony Orchestra commissioned a piece from Shchedrin for the ensemble's 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary – the Third Concerto for Orchestra, or 'Old Russian Circus Music.'<sup>36</sup> Whimsical and light-hearted, this symphonic work was, for Shchedrin, the embodiment of the new era that Perestroika had ushered into the country: in his

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<sup>32</sup> RGALI f. 3267, o. 1, ed.kh. 371: 126-7.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid, 127.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid, 1.

<sup>35</sup> Shchedrin, *Memories*, 177.

<sup>36</sup> Kholopova and Shchedrin, *Put'*, 174.

words, he wrote it, ‘in the years of hope and positive changes that had charged me with energy and optimism.’<sup>37</sup>

Shchedrin did not earn Western success passively: he began to embark on a campaign of subtle self-promotion in the West of the kind that had made him so successful in his home country. Letters and contracts from his archives reveal that by the early 1980s, he was actively striving to advance his image and reputation abroad through expanding his sphere of contacts. A letter dated 17 January 1984 from Radio KFAC of Los Angeles, California, demonstrates that Shchedrin had sent unsolicited recordings of his music to the station to gain publicity.<sup>38</sup> The producer enjoyed them, and he agreed to consider broadcasting *Dead Souls* if he could first get a copy of an act-by-act synopsis in English.<sup>39</sup> This shows impressive initiative from a composer who had grown up in an artistic culture managed and curated (almost comprehensively) by unions and governmental oversight. He exhibited similar initiative throughout the decade. In 1985, he was corresponding with Universal Edition in Vienna about other publication opportunities, another conversation which Shchedrin himself had instigated.<sup>40</sup> Competitions and awards were also in the composer’s sights. In 1986, he considered applying for the Grawemeyer Award for Music Composition (based at University of Louisville School of Music), which would have included \$150,000 in prize money and performances of his compositions.<sup>41</sup> In perhaps his boldest move, a few years later, Shchedrin entrusted his wife with a score of his latest un-commissioned work when she left for her ballet tour to the United States, hoping she would place it in the right hands. She was able to pass it to Mstislav Rostropovich, then music director of the National Symphony Orchestra in

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<sup>37</sup> Ibid.

<sup>38</sup> RGALI f. 3267, o. 1, ed.kh. 345: 25.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid, 28.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid, 47-8. I infer that he considered applying by the annotated application form for this competition in his personal files in the archives. It is not clear whether he did send materials in the end.

Washington, D.C., which resulted in the premiere of this work, *Stikhira*, in the US capital in 1988.<sup>42</sup>

The experiences in Boston, Japan, and Chicago taught Shchedrin that in the rest of the world, the capitalist world, promoters paid composers for their work, and opportunities were ripe for those who stretched out their hands to pick them. While he took advantage of these opportunities abroad, however, he initially also fought to modernise the landscape at home as well. In an address to the Composers Union in 1990, Shchedrin excoriated the Soviet artists' rights organisation for profiting at the expense of composers, and demanded the founding of a new artists' rights organisation to protect composers.<sup>43</sup> He also pointed out the desperate need for organisations of managers and impresarios for artists – while in the West, he noted, artists have managers that actively fight for their careers, in the Soviet Union, the artists have to do everything themselves, and end up standing in lines at *Goskonsert* (the state concert organisation) begging for passports and visas.<sup>44</sup> Though he argued that the country needed to be 'born again', however, such transformation did not happen quickly, and Shchedrin continued to branch out in the West.<sup>45</sup>

As Shchedrin grew familiar with Western working methods and networks abroad during the 1980s, he gained an advantage over his Soviet peers who had travelled little outside the Soviet Union before the fall of the Iron Curtain. For example, Sofia Gubaidulina's first major international exposure came at the festival in Boston in 1988, the same festival in which Shchedrin's work was featured. While she was introduced as a relatively unknown composer, however, Shchedrin at this point had already established himself as one of the most prominent Soviet composers being performed in the West. And even though the likes of Gubaidulina, Alfred Schnittke and Edison Denisov eventually became heroes of musical counterculture in

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<sup>42</sup> Shchedrin, *Memories*, 179.

<sup>43</sup> Rodion Shchedrin, 'Strana nasha dolzhna vozrozhdat'sya', *Sovetskaia muzyka* 625, no. 12 (1990): 6-10. 7.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, 8.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*

the West, this happened nearly a decade after Shchedrin had already been promoting himself and making his name known.<sup>46</sup> His adaptability, which served so well in surviving the Soviet system, eventually also served him well in transitioning out of it.

### **Between Soviet and Russian: society and opera in transition**

By 1989, despite the reforms of Gorbachev, opera had not yet recovered from its lethargy. It was a watershed year for global history, and yet, few major Russian composers were writing operas.<sup>47</sup> Shchedrin's *Lolita* would become one of the only operas written during the Perestroika years by a Soviet composer, and as such, deserves a close look at how it straddled the ethical and political changes overtaking the country. Shchedrin's choice for the Paris commission, *Lolita*, was the single most provocative text he could have selected: it had already sparked scandal across two continents. *Lolita* roughly follows the story of a middle-aged man's abduction and rape of a twelve-year-old girl. Told from the perspective of the rapist, Humbert Humbert, however, the author paints a compelling and nuanced portrait of the internal world of this character, which at times numbs the reader to the atrocities he is committing; this technique only served to increase the scandal of the novel's reception. Nabokov's environment of 1950s America proved too conservative for such a book and he struggled to find a publisher. Since there were no national guidelines for the appropriate content of books, however, publishers resorted to turning to the more clearly defined standards dictated by Hollywood, particularly, by the Motion Picture Production Code of 1930. Among other restrictions, the code concerned itself with what it called the protection of family values; it stated that 'The sanctity of the institution of marriage and the home shall be upheld. Pictures shall not infer that

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<sup>46</sup> Harlow Robinson, 'Facing the Music: Perestroika and the High Arts', *The Soviet and Post-Soviet Review* 15, no. 1 (1988): 151-65. 161. A spread in *Sovetskaia muzyka* in 1983 also compiled foreign reviews of Shchedrin's work, proving to be an impressive compilation. See I. Strazhenkova, "'Odin iz samykh znamenitykh...'" iz zarubezhnoi pressy', *Sovetskaia muzyka* 530, no. 1 (1983): 36-8.

<sup>47</sup> This comes from publicly reported composition lists and timetables of major composers.

low forms of sexual relationship are the accepted or the common thing.’<sup>48</sup> Nabokov’s novel not only crossed these boundaries, but shattered them: a story with the point of view from the mind of a paedophile was unthinkable. Consequently, *Lolita* was rejected by at least five American publishers, including Simon & Schuster and Viking, which labelled it ‘pure pornography’.<sup>49</sup> These rejections prompted Nabokov to accept the first offer he received, one from a dubious publishing house in France, called Olympia Press, which was known for producing a wide range of literature, but especially for erotica for English-speaking tourists.<sup>50</sup> Despite questionable beginnings, in 1955, Nabokov received a surprising endorsement that would kindle new interest in the novel and reawaken the debate surrounding it: noted Catholic novelist Graham Greene, renowned already for *The Power and the Glory* and *The End of the Affair*, named *Lolita* as one of the three best books of the year in the British *Sunday Times*.<sup>51</sup> This caught the attention of publishers on both sides of the Atlantic. Finally, in 1958, G.P. Putnam’s Sons succeeded in publishing it in the United States, and sales immediately soared: 100,000 copies flew off the shelves in only three weeks.<sup>52</sup>

The Soviet publication history, however, is another saga altogether. Nabokov only finished his own Russian translation of the novel in 1965, which was published two years later by the New York-based company Phaedra. Though *Lolita* was not published in the Soviet Union until 1989, by the time the official copies populated bookstores, well-worn, self-bound, *samizdat* (self-published) copies had been passed around intellectual circles.<sup>53</sup> Despite the fact that a black market copy cost about 80 roubles, an amount that sustained the average family for an entire month, one commentator noted in 1970 that nearly anyone who had serious literary

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<sup>48</sup> Graham Vickers, *Chasing Lolita: How Popular Culture Corrupted Nabokov’s Little Girl All Over Again* (Chicago: Chicago Review Press, 2008), 42.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, 48.

<sup>50</sup> Julian Connolly, *A Reader’s Guide to Nabokov’s Lolita* (Brighton, MA: Academic Studies Press, 2009), 5

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, 6.

<sup>52</sup> Vickers, *Chasing Lolita*, 51.

<sup>53</sup> O. Shekhovtsova, ‘Spending the Night with Lolita: Vladimir Nabokov’s Novel in the USSR’, *Russian Social Science Review* 48, no. 1 (2007): 71-91. 72.

interest had managed to read *Lolita*.<sup>54</sup> It was one of these illicit copies which Shchedrin claims to have read at the house of his friend and mentor Lilia Brik in the early 1960s.<sup>55</sup>

The official reception of *Lolita* was adamant condemnation: at various times, the novel was dubbed either a disgrace to literature, or a ‘satire on the dissolution of Western society’, or simply dismissed as modernist since it did not answer the questions Soviet literature ought to answer, that is, the role of man in society and in national destiny.<sup>56</sup> Probably because of this ever-evolving controversy, which kept *Lolita* alive as a risky and important text throughout the late Soviet period, Shchedrin proposed *Lolita* to Rostropovich as the topic of his opera in 1989 – which was as soon as he possibly could have done. This was the year it was first published in the Soviet Union, and only the second year since the ban on reading it was lifted. The choice itself was ideal because its history of prohibition advertised itself, as did the fear it induced in conservative critics and officials.

Two sea-changes in Soviet society influenced not just Shchedrin’s choice of this text as an opera, but his interpretation of it. The first was the new-found permission to explore previously forbidden aspects of morality, and the second was the newly legalised rehabilitation of religion.<sup>57</sup> As a comprehensive political and social project, the Soviet Union had strictly dictated the moral parameters expected of its citizens. Under Stalin, the demands on the citizen were so expansive and specific that some scholars argue that moral reasoning could not even have existed: it only began in Soviet society after the death of Stalin since moral reasoning can only exist when there is freedom of choice.<sup>58</sup> As the grip of the authorities loosened in the Khrushchev period, morality became more heterogeneous.<sup>59</sup> Nikita Khrushchev, concerned

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<sup>54</sup> Ibid, 73.

<sup>55</sup> Bryan Karenyk, ‘Staging *Lolita* (and ‘Saving’ Humbert): Nabokov, Shchedrin and the Art of Adaptation’, *Slavonic and East European Review* 94, no. 4 (2016): 601-33. 609.

<sup>56</sup> Shekhovtsova, ‘Spending the Night’, 85.

<sup>57</sup> He discussed his opinions on both of these matters in an interview. See Rodion Shchedrin, ‘Izvechnaia tsennost’ muzyki. Besedu vela V. Kholopova’, *Pravda*, 16.09.1988.

<sup>58</sup> Igor Kon, ‘Moral Culture’, in *Russian Culture at the Crossroads: Paradoxes of Post-Communist Consciousness*, ed. Dmitri Shalin (Boulder: Westview Press, 1996), 190.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid, 189.

about the changing norms, published *The Moral Code of the Builder of Communism* in 1961, which was adopted as federal Party policy as part of the Twenty-Second Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union.<sup>60</sup> This code comprised twelve points, including stipulations such as number seven, ‘Honesty, ethical cleanliness, as well as simplicity and modesty both in private and public life’; and number eight, ‘Mutual respect in the family, and care for the upbringing of the children’.<sup>61</sup> Some scholars have suggested that the public moral shifts of Perestroika were foreshadowed during the Khrushchev period, however, because decades of ‘double-think’ and split lives meant that people lived by two sets of rules: one governed by the private sphere, and one governed by the state.<sup>62</sup> During Perestroika, general economic and moral malaise, interest in the West, and shrinking loyalty to the state triggered public deviation from formerly accepted moral norms.<sup>63</sup>

In the 1980s, these societal shifts dramatically affected the lives of women. During the early Soviet period, women were expected both to fulfil their maternal duties and to participate in economic activity; they were praised for pragmatism and productivity.<sup>64</sup> Little room was left for femininity or self-determination over lifestyle choices. Even in art the female form had been masculinised into square, chiselled likenesses which matched men in all physical features except skirts and hairstyles.<sup>65</sup> During Perestroika, however, the attitude changed toward the display of femininity, as well as toward public displays of affection. Newspaper articles demonstrate this shift in public opinion, as articles lambasting the previously lauded view of Soviet women spending all of their time at work appeared; the ‘blue socks’, as they were called,

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<sup>60</sup> Ibid, 191.

<sup>61</sup> *Moral’nyi kodeks stroitel’ia kommunizma*. [http://krotov.info/lib\\_sec/11\\_k/kom/munizm.htm](http://krotov.info/lib_sec/11_k/kom/munizm.htm). Accessed 26.01.2018.

<sup>62</sup> Irina Davydova, ‘Moral Reconfiguration of the Former Soviet Union’, *Manchester Sociology Occasional Papers*, no. 53 (2002): 5.

<sup>63</sup> Alexei Yurchak, *Everything Was Forever Until it Was No More: The Last Soviet Generation* (Princeton: Princetown University Press, 2006), 243.

<sup>64</sup> Maxine Molyneux, ‘The “Woman Question” in the Age of Perestroika’, *Agenda* 7, no. 10 (1990): 89-108. 96.

<sup>65</sup> Victoria Bonnell, ‘The Representation of Women in Early Soviet Political Art’, *Russian Review* 50, no. 3 (1991): 267-88. 278.

were no longer supposed to be exclusively masculine.<sup>66</sup> The publications *Pravda* and *Izvestiia* began to praise beauty pageants, and the weekly Moscow paper *Nedelia* included arguments that women only reached their prime in their forties and could still be appealing to men at that stage (a discussion that simply would not have been considered relevant or acceptable by earlier Soviet gender standards).<sup>67</sup> For the first time, it became common to see couples holding hands publicly, and even rock music became encouraged as a means for young people to learn to spend time with members of the opposite gender.<sup>68</sup> Anthropologist Jarret Zigon has argued that these subtle changes foretold the decline in marriage and the family to come, that the liberalisation of sex became the symbol for the Russian people losing their moral compass.<sup>69</sup>

On the flip side, however, even as women were finally allowed to express more of their femininity and, in theory, were allowed equal participation in economic and political life, exploitation became rampant in new ways. The pornography industry exploded, and the reported incidences of rape and wife-beating increased drastically.<sup>70</sup> And while the increase in reported incidents does not necessarily mean that there was, in fact, an increase in such activities, it is just as important that such activities were in now finally in the spotlight, a change that also became reflected in popular culture. As the state stopped censoring print or film media in the 1990s, explicit material became so readily available that it became the chief reading material for a large segment of the population.<sup>71</sup> The pornographic movie industry was so profitable that even the *Komsomol* (the Communist youth league), became actively involved in its production.<sup>72</sup> Even films not classified as pornographic typically included scenes of violence rather than romance, often assault or rape rather than mutually consenting interactions.

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<sup>66</sup> Dmitry Shlapentokh, 'Lovemaking in the Time of Perestroika: Sex in the Context of Political Culture', *Studies in Comparative Communism* 25, no. 2 (1992): 151-76. 157.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*, 157.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>69</sup> Jarrett Zigon, *Making the New Post-Soviet Person: Moral Experience in Contemporary Moscow* (Boston: Brill, 2010), 13.

<sup>70</sup> Molyneux, 'Woman Question', 105.

<sup>71</sup> Shlapentokh, 'Lovemaking', 159-160.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*

A few examples include *Menia zovut Arlekino* (*My Name is Arlekino*), *Dorogaia Elena Sergeevna* (*Dear Elena Sergeevna*), and *Vybor* (*Choice*).<sup>73</sup> Prostitution also became one of the most viable employment options for women, and by the early 1990s, was the fifth most desired career choice for young girls; as the stigma of the Soviet period had been removed, however, these women were left with even less legal and social protection than they had had before Perestroika.<sup>74</sup> The illusion of liberation did not fool anyone. General worry about the breakdown of morals (if not about the abuses of women) became a recurring theme in political and academic discourse,<sup>75</sup> and the corrupting influence of mass media became a growing concern of the general population.<sup>76</sup> Shchedrin was no exception. In 1988, he spoke in an interview about his worry about the decimation of traditional morality that occurred during the Soviet period: ‘Along with the blowing up of cathedrals and destruction of architecture, morality and ethics were destroyed as well. We were separated from the toll of bells, from bell ringers and from books, in which every person could find for themselves eternal truth.’<sup>77</sup> He concluded the interview by stating, ‘I would wish that questions of the moral cleansing of society, and the building of culture, would be objects of concern for everyone.’<sup>78</sup>

No single work of art would display these shifting attitudes as aptly, nor pave the way for *Lolita* so clearly, as the revolutionary film *Malen'kaia Vera* (*Little Vera*, 1988). This film features a teenage girl trapped in a dull, provincial, Soviet life. It presents a cynical take on Soviet society and the impossibility of finding hope in the system (in many ways analogous to Andrei Zviagintsev's 2014 film *Leviatan* [*Leviathan*]). Most shocking, however, were the explicit sex scenes, which were the first to appear on screen in Russian film history.<sup>79</sup> Arguably,

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<sup>73</sup> Ibid.

<sup>74</sup> Molyneux, ‘Woman Question’, 92; Shlapentokh, ‘Lovemaking’, 163

<sup>75</sup> Zigon, *Making the New*, 17.

<sup>76</sup> Davydova and Sharrock, ‘Moral Reconfiguration’, 22.

<sup>77</sup> Shchedrin, ‘Izvechnaia tsennost' muzyki’

<sup>78</sup> Ibid.

<sup>79</sup> Robert Lagerberg and Andrew McGregor, ‘Home, Sweet Home: The Significance of the Apartment in *Malen'kaia Vera/Little Vera*’, *Studies in European Cinema* 8, no. 1 (2011): 57-65. 59.

however, the artistic import of this film is that it ‘dealt the final blow to Socialist Realism’ in Soviet art.<sup>80</sup> It destroyed Socialist Realism by 1) raising questions instead of answering them, which is directly against the philosophy of Socialist Realism, and 2) by portraying ‘a squalid slice of Soviet life without any redeeming feature or commentary’.<sup>81</sup> Even the sex scenes, the formerly forbidden fruit, were portrayed not as romantic, but monotonous; it seemed to show that there were no shreds of joy left in the Soviet Union, not even in intimacy. Still, *Little Vera* was the highest grossing film of 1988 in the Soviet Union, perhaps because it rang true for so many Russians.<sup>82</sup> It was in this context that Shchedrin began writing *Lolita*: the unthinkable had become permissible, and even encouraged.

## **Between Secular and Sacred**

In addition, however, Shchedrin’s version of *Lolita* includes the other most taboo topic of the Soviet period: God. Before the stagnation of the Soviet economy in the 1980s, the project of enforced secularism had been effective, and in general prevented Soviet citizens from turning to religion for alternatives to communist morality.<sup>83</sup> The particular form of ‘scientific atheism’ that the Soviet government promoted was a far cry from the New Atheism or a casual lack of belief that the term is often associated with in the West;<sup>84</sup> rather, it was a creed in itself that required commitment.<sup>85</sup> Even those who may have wanted to convert would have been hard-pressed to find resources: the spread of religious knowledge among lay-people had not been a priority of the Russian Orthodox Church, and even before the Soviet crackdown on

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<sup>80</sup> Ibid, 59.

<sup>81</sup> Ibid.

<sup>82</sup> ‘Little Vera’, IMDB, <https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0095574/> Accessed 09.05.2020.

<sup>83</sup> Larissa Titarenko, ‘On the Shifting Nature of Religion during the Ongoing Post-Communist Transformation in Russia, Belarus and Ukraine’, *Social Compass* 55, no. 2 (2008): 237-54. 239.

<sup>84</sup> See, for example, Richard Dawkins, *The God Delusion*, (Boston: Mariner, 2008); Christopher Hitchens, *God Is Not Great: How Religion Poisons Everything* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 2008).

<sup>85</sup> Gregory Alles, ‘Studying Religions with the Iron Curtain Closed and Open’, *Method & Theory in the Study of Religion* 30, no. 2 (2018): 185-90.

religion, the church had not put structures in place to teach theology to parishioners (as Protestants do in the context of Sunday school, for example).<sup>86</sup> As these controls loosened in the 1980s, however, a ‘religious renaissance’ swept across eastern Europe.<sup>87</sup> The late 1980s and early 1990s witnessed an unprecedented growth in religious belief in Russia; even in the few months before the fall of the Soviet Union, about a fifth of Russians shifted their beliefs from atheism to theism.<sup>88</sup> Interest in religion extended not only to the Orthodox Church, which witnessed the greatest increase in total numbers, however, but also for Pentecostal and evangelical branches, spurred by a wave of foreign missionaries in the early 1990s, which boasted the highest growth rates.<sup>89</sup>

The youth were particularly affected: 30% of Russians under the age of twenty-five became theists, and 25% of Russians between the ages of twenty-five and thirty-four.<sup>90</sup> These conversions brought the youth into closer consonance with their believing grandparents, rather than with their atheist parents, who had been raised entirely in an anti-religious system. There are many possible reasons for this growth. One is that as the economy slowed and the Communist ideology began to be discredited in the 1980s, people began to look for hope in other areas, particularly in those realms that the government had previously discouraged.<sup>91</sup> But the turn toward God was certainly not only motivated by a desire to spite the state, especially when considering the Protestant revivals. Western evangelists offered a message of hope outside of physical circumstances, often provided donations of goods to those in need, and also offered much-coveted contact with Westerners.<sup>92</sup> As Cathy Wanner has argued, evangelicalism

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<sup>86</sup> Titarenko, ‘On the Shifting Nature’, 244.

<sup>87</sup> Catherine Wanner, *Communities of the Converted: Ukrainians and Global Evangelicalism* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2007), 2.

<sup>88</sup> Torsten Löfsted, ‘Religious Revival among Orthodox and Pentecostals in Russia: Causes and Limitations’, *Religion, State and Society* 40, no. 1 (2012): 92-111. 96; Andrew Greeley, ‘A Religious Revival in Russia?’, *The Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 33, no. 3 (1994): 253-72. 272.

<sup>89</sup> Löfsted, ‘Religious Revival’, 92.

<sup>90</sup> Greeley, ‘A Religious’, 272.

<sup>91</sup> Löfsted, ‘Religious Revival’, 96.

<sup>92</sup> *Ibid*, 96.

took a firm hold at the beginning of the transition period because ‘the alternative moralities that evangelical communities advocated in the face of secularising tendencies were relevant and meaningful to their daily lives’.<sup>93</sup> In other words, while formerly unquestionable norms were breaking down, citizens were striving to find new frameworks to put in their place.

To the surprise of many scholars, conversions were even more prevalent among the well-educated communities and holders of university degrees than among the blue-collar population.<sup>94</sup> In fact, by the beginning of the 1970s, many members of the intelligentsia had already begun to turn toward the church.<sup>95</sup> This wave of conversions was accompanied by the rebuilding of churches, an increase in mentions of the Russian Orthodox Church in political discourse, an exponential increase in the numbers of Russians who self-identified as Orthodox, and a substantial increase in the composition of religious music; major liturgical compositions were written not only by Shchedrin but by Schnittke, Gubaidulina, Denisov, and Pärt.<sup>96</sup> Along with this return to religion was a return to traditional family values. Some scholars argued that this was only a nominal revival, and that over time, this newfound religiosity and moral traditionalism would weaken.<sup>97</sup> But this did not happen. Instead, conservative morality increased alongside religious self-identification.<sup>98</sup> Paradoxically, this conservative moral sensibility would become the pillar of Shchedrin’s interpretation of *Lolita*.

### **The Lolita Codex: adapting a banned novel for the stage**

The trailer for the 1962 Stanley Kubrick film of *Lolita* begins with the line, ‘How did they ever make a film of *Lolita*?’. And this, indeed, was the question for the opera as well.

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<sup>93</sup> Wanner, *Communities*, 7

<sup>94</sup> Löfsted, ‘Religious Revival’, 100.

<sup>95</sup> Zoe Katrina Knox, *Russian Society and the Orthodox Church: Religion in Russia After Communism* (New York: Routledge, 2004), 5.

<sup>96</sup> Geoffrey Evans and Ksenia Northmore-Ball, ‘The Limits of Secularisation? The Resurgence of Orthodoxy in Post-Soviet Russia’, *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 51(4): 795-808. 795. See also L.N. Raaben, *O dukhovnom renessanse v russkoi muzyke 1960-80-kh godov* (St Petersburg: Blanka, 1998).

<sup>97</sup> Evans and Northmore-Ball, ‘The Limits’, 799.

<sup>98</sup> *Ibid*, 805.

Because Shchedrin's *Lolita* confronts the two most taboo topics of the Soviet period, God and sex, it epitomises a work of art poised to challenge the status quo. Shchedrin's adaptation of text, first in the libretto, and then in the music, however, demonstrates that his interpretation includes both acceptance of, and a challenge to, the shifting norms of society. A trove of primary materials in Shchedrin's personal archives sheds light on the process by which he affected this transformation of *Lolita* into a quasi-religious parable. Previously unseen by researchers until I was given access in 2018, this collection includes notebooks with drafts of the libretto, sketches of the music, and dozens of letters between himself, Rostropovich, and Dmitry Nabokov.<sup>99</sup>

Shchedrin's attitude seemed to be that as long as he maintained verbatim quotes, his interpretation could be considered a valid and faithful one – no matter how much he might manipulate the flow and order of the narrative. In so doing, he placed himself squarely in the tradition of Shostakovich and Prokofiev – as he had for his work on *Dead Souls* – in his adaptation principles, where the emphasis was word-for-word adaptation rather than manipulation of the text to suit rhyming conventions.<sup>100</sup> The seven notebooks which form the basis of the drafts of the libretto confirm this attitude toward the importance of preserving original phrases, as do his letters. Shchedrin stressed his position in a letter to Rostropovich in 1992, which he enclosed with his first full version of the libretto, stating, 'There is not one word that is not from Nabokov, there is nothing that comes from me.'<sup>101</sup> This is a misleading assertion, however, for two reasons. First, adapting a novel into an opera is as much about what you leave out as what you include: Shchedrin was forced to leave out over 380 pages. By omission alone, Nabokov would have to become, in some respects, Shchedrin. Second,

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<sup>99</sup> As of 12.09.2019, no researcher had been granted access to RGALI, f. 3267, o. 2, ed.kh. 36.

<sup>100</sup> See Chapter 2 for a discussion of the adaptation of Shostakovich and Prokofiev. For more on the *Mighty Handful*, see Caryl Emerson, *Modest Musorgsky and Boris Godunov: Myths, Realities, Reconsiderations* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 70.

<sup>101</sup> RGALI, f. 3267, o. 3, ed.kh. 15. Emphasis original.

Shchedrin's claim is surprising because it is simply false: in the fraction of remaining pages, Shchedrin *did* add text, and the text he added would reframe the entire story and prove pivotal in building his elaborate formal structure for his opera.

Notes from both *Lolita* and *Dead Souls* demonstrate that Shchedrin's working method would begin with painstaking copying, cutting, and rearranging of the original text before any musical notes made it onto the page. Since the final libretto reduced the 400-page Russian version of *Lolita* to only seventeen pages, the editing was substantial. Out of seven notebooks ranging from thirty to ninety hand-written pages each, three are filled from cover to cover with copied passages from the novel with many sentences either crossed out or underlined, and particular emphasis given to dialogue; these seem to be the first three in which he recorded ideas about adapting *Lolita*.<sup>102</sup> These three, which I refer to as the 'green notebooks' due to the colour of their covers, include very few references to the musical interpretations of the lines he chose from the novel. That step comes once the libretto is more complete. Even so, along the way, Shchedrin began to sprinkle his libretto with connections for what musical form each portion of text might become. He included a plethora of options about transforming text into music, including: *Singspiel*, arioso, recitative, solo acapella, symphony, duet, cavatina, and others.<sup>103</sup> All of these forms come into play in the final version – perhaps the first hint that *Lolita* would be indebted to Berg, who played similarly with found structures of the musical past both in his opera *Wozzeck* and in the opera most linked to *Lolita*, *Lulu*.

The structure, however, and the philosophical underpinning appear to have been Shchedrin's primary concerns, and the reason he pored over every word so deliberately.

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<sup>102</sup> RGALI, f. 3267, o. 2, ed.kh. 36, p. 41-57, 58-67, 84-100. Since the composer rarely dates his notebooks, it is not possible to confirm beyond a doubt that they are the earliest, but there are hints: they contain a greater amount of material from the novel, with indications about which portions he would later eliminate, and the rest of the material in the archives seems to refer back to these notebooks.

<sup>103</sup> RGALI, f. 3267, o. 2, ed.kh. 36, 41-57. What Shchedrin refers to as *Singspiel*, would better be described as *Sprechstimme*, but Shchedrin did not seem to be aware of the term, and in his drafts called spoken text of any kind 'Singspiel', just as he called any sung dialogue 'recitative', although *Sprechgesang* would often be more fitting.

Shchedrin constructed the opera on two pillars: multiple ontological planes (that is, planes of different kinds of spiritual existence), and pairs of opposites (musical, moral, character). In interpreting Nabokov's novel, Shchedrin determined that the storyline of Lolita herself was only the foreground and decided that there were three layers to the story, as he noted to himself in his draft books: 'it's like three operas at the same time'.<sup>104</sup> Each layer correlates to a different level of being – the profane, the human, and the divine. The first is that of 'only Lolita and H.H.'<sup>105</sup> This is the foreground of the action, the level of the characters. In the biblical parable of the Prodigal Son, this plane would equate to the plot line of the central characters, the younger son who runs away and the father. Shchedrin's second plane consists of 'all of the actions of Charlotte, and Charlotte and Humbert' (Lolita's mother).<sup>106</sup> In the Prodigal Son, this maps onto the storyline of the secondary, contrasting characters, the father and the older brother. Finally, the third is one that Shchedrin labels 'counter-light' (*kontr-svet*), which includes the judges (who he added to the first scene of the opera to create a court-room scenario with Humbert on the stand), and 'the interruptions' (*perebivki*): the cathedral, the commercials, and the drive-in movie.<sup>107</sup> This third plane is most complex; in the parable framework, it would be Jesus' explanation, the point of reference from which the listeners are supposed to see everything. In this case, it is a multivalent background which in turn includes three different moral forces: divine justice (represented by the boys' choir), human justice (represented by the judges), and Western capitalism (represented by the advertising girls).<sup>108</sup>

In order to see how he intersperses the planes in the formal structure, I have sketched a synopsis of each scene which includes the title, the main musical form(s) operating in each

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<sup>104</sup> RGALI, f. 3267, o. 2, ed.kh. 36, p. 28. R

<sup>105</sup> Ibid.

<sup>106</sup> Ibid.

<sup>107</sup> Ibid.

<sup>108</sup> The advertising girls play a fascinating role in this opera, which, unfortunately, is beyond the scope of this chapter. Further work remains to be done on their portrayal of capitalism, however, and on their role in the world Shchedrin constructs.

number, the plane (in Shchedrin's ontological schema) in which the number fits, and the key plot points. As Tables 1.1, 1.2, and 2 reveal, the 'foreground' (main plot) of Humbert and Lolita only comes into focus in Act II, as the supporting characters of Plane 2 are phased out of the action. Plane 3, however, 'the interruptions', appears not only between scenes, but often encroaches into scenes and reorients the attention of the audience to consider the moral valence of Plane 1. As the opera progresses, the planes integrate within scenes, as opposed to being introduced separately with one plane dominating each scene. By the final scene of the opera, the planes are layered simultaneously, their musical material combining to form a fresh blend of harmonies and instruments.

While a plan for an opera consisting of three separate planes of action – loosely correlated to different moral forms of being – seems at first an abstract one, Shchedrin discovered a broader framework that encompasses and concretises these elements: the biblical parable. As Shchedrin jotted down his thoughts about what to include in his notebooks, one page stands out as his eureka moment. Filled with highlighting and exclamation points, he jotted across the page, 'Lolita – is this a parable?', and then highlighted in green next to his own question, 'this is a parable!!! Biblical! This is the nervous system of the book!'<sup>109</sup> By 'the nervous system' of the book, he meant the core form which every branch emanates, and according to which everything is explained. From this point on in his drafts, nearly every sentence of lyric or phrase of music is connected to some part of the parable codex. The

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<sup>109</sup> RGALI, f. 3267, o. 2, ed.kh. 36: 37.

Table 1.1  
Formal structure of Shchedrin's *Lolita*, Act I, Scenes 1-10

Act 1: Scene	Musical forms	Description	Plane 1: Foreground (Lolita and Humbert)	Plane 2: Supporting characters (Charlotte, + Humbert)	Plane 3: Spiritual commentary (the interruptions)
1. Introduction	orchestral prelude	The instrumental prelude introduces the leitmotifs of Lolita and of Humbert's lust, but not of Humbert himself.	N/A	N/A	N/A
2. Prologue	<i>Singspiel</i> and recitative	Quilty's ghost introduces the scene, screaming, 'I can arrange for you to be present at executions', then, 'not everyone knows that'. The rest of the scene reveals Humbert defending himself before a chorus of judges. This form would better be described as <i>Sprechstimme</i> , but Shchedrin did not seem to be aware of the term, and in his drafts called spoken text of any kind 'Singspiel', just as he called any sung dialogue 'recitative', although <i>Sprechgesang</i> would often be more fitting.			●
3. Chorale	chorale	A boys' choir from a cathedral gallery sings 'Mater dei, ora pro nobis' in a chorale.			●
4. Charlotte Haze's House	recitative	Humbert arrives at the house of Mrs. Haze, and sung dialogue is exchanged between Charlotte, her black servant, Humbert, and Lolita.	●	●	
5. Humbert	arioso	Humbert begins by singing to himself about meeting Lolita, but at the end of the arioso switches to a different timeline and addresses the jury, confessing he married Charlotte to get to Lolita.	●		●
6. Charlotte's Love	arioso; duettino	Charlotte composes a love letter to Humbert. Humbert enters and rapes or seduces Charlotte (this is left somewhat ambiguous in the opera as it is in the novel). Quilty's ghost enters 'disguised as a high government official' along with the choir of judges.		●	●
7. Advertisement	duet	Two girls 'from billboards along the road' sing an advertisement for condoms. This has a feel of popular music, including a drum kit and a saxophone, which do not appear elsewhere in the opera.			●
8. The Seduction	recitative; arioso; <i>Singspiel</i> ; duet	Humbert and Lolita exchange sung dialogue. Charlotte picks up the phone, and freezes, while the light raises on Humbert and he sings his arioso, 'Spider-like, weaving webs around the house.' Lolita and Charlotte quarrel in spoken dialogue. Lolita and Humbert sing a duet on the word 'Carmen' with allusions to <i>Habenera</i> . The scene concludes with Humbert commenting matter-of-factly on his own behaviour to the judges.	●		
9. Clare Quilty	soliloquy	The ghost of Quilty sings a soliloquy, partially in aria style, partially in recitative, about his own depravities.			●
10. Supper on the Veranda	ensemble; arioso; <i>Singspiel</i>	Charlotte and Mrs. Chatfield, and Humbert and Mr. Chatfield, discuss banalities. Charlotte sings an arioso about the students of Ramsdale Gymnasium. Charlotte and Humbert exchange spoken dialogue about his locked box.		●	

Table 1.2  
Formal structure of Shchedrin's *Lolita*, Act I, Scenes 11-21

Act 1: Scene	Musical forms	Description	Plane 1: Foreground (Lolita and Humbert)	Plane 2: Supporting characters (Charlotte, Charlotte + Humbert)	Plane 3: Spiritual commentary (the interruptions)
11. Monologue (Humbert's first)	soliloquy	Humbert muses to himself about how to eliminate Charlotte.		●	
12. Advertisement for Door Locks	duet	The advertising girls return with accompaniment including drum kit, saxophone, and bird whistle.			●
13. Humbert's Dream	recitative	Humbert imagines being with Lolita. The judges appear in order to condemn this thought.	●		
14. Charlotte's Death	duet; recitative	Charlotte discovers Humbert's diary which reveals his lust for her daughter and loathing for her. He pushes her into the road and she is run over by a car and perishes.		●	
15. Sinfonia I	interlude; <i>Singspiel</i>	Includes the leitmotifs of Humbert's lust, Lolita's sorrow, and an allusion to the chorale of the boys' choir. The scene concludes with spoken monologue from Humbert about Charlotte's death.	N/A	N/A	N/A
16. Goodbye, Camp 'Q'	duet; interlude	Humbert collects Lolita from camp and they sing. A brief interlude with the road leitmotif takes over, followed by a duet with Lolita and Humbert. The scene concludes with another interlude of the road motif.	●		
17. The Enchanted Hunters	arioso; recitative	Lolita sings of her experience at camp and of arriving at the hotel. Humbert explains they will be sleeping in the same room. The judges appear in order to condemn this behaviour. Humbert drugs Lolita with sleeping pills.	●		
18. Scenes with Quilty	recitative	Quilty runs into Humbert and sees through his lies.	●		
19. Sinfonia II	interlude; <i>Singspiel</i>	This includes Humbert's leitmotif, material from the introduction with the electric chair, the leitmotif of Lolita's sadness. It concludes with a spoken monologue of Humbert's.	N/A	N/A	N/A
20. Humbert's Sin	duettino	The orchestra plays the motif of Humbert's lust. Lolita awakens and wants a drink; Humbert asks her to show him the 'game' she learned at camp.	●		
21. Act I Finale	<i>Singspiel</i> ; recitative; chorale	Humbert persuades Lolita to show him the 'game' she learned at camp. As Lolita begins to manipulate him into a lovemaking position, lights go up on the chorus of judges in the cathedral in the background, who sing the chorale previously sung by the boys' choir. The boy descant voice enters solo. Humbert now addresses the judges, switching his character entirely into Plane 3. Back in Plane 1, they hit the road again; Lolita discovers her mother is dead.	●		●

Table 2  
Formal structure of Shchedrin's *Lolita*, Act 2

Act 2: Scene No.	Musical forms	Description	Plane 1: Foreground (Lolita and Humbert)	Plane 2: Supporting characters (Charlotte, Humbert)	Plane 3: Spiritual commentary (the interruptions)
22. Wandering from Motel to Motel	orchestral prelude; <i>arioso</i> ; <i>Singspiel</i> ; interlude	The orchestra opens with Lolita's leitmotif, and then transitions to an instrumental version of the boys' chorale. Lolita begins her <i>arioso</i> , musing about death. They resume their journey in the car, and the leitmotif of the road returns.	●		
23. Life in Beardsley	ensemble	An ensemble of neighbours sing about Dolly (Lolita) Haze.		●	
24. Quarrel and Reconciliation	duet; chorus	Humbert insists Lolita confess what he imagines she told others about their relationship. They reconcile, and Lolita admits to feeling 'romantic'; Humbert carries her off stage. The chorus of basses enters, condemning the actions.	●		●
25. Remembrances of the Road	duettino, duet	Humbert accuses Lolita of speaking to someone out the window. She denies this. They travel, and the road leitmotif returns. The advertising girls take the stage and sing a commercial for the motel.	●		●
26. The Pursuit	drama, chorale	Humbert notices Quilty following them. Lolita drugs Humbert. Quilty knocks. This is not exactly recitative, nor is it a trio - it is rather loosely sung dialogue over leitmotivic music, which I call here 'drama', as it is for the purpose of moving the plot forward. The boys' choir appears singing the <i>Mater Dei</i> in the distance.		●	●
27. A Slip in the Face	drama; interlude; duet	Lolita makes a phone call. Humbert gets angry. The road leitmotif returns as they embark once again on a journey. The two advertising girls return to promote Dromedary Cigarettes.	●		●
28. Lolita's Disappearance	arioso; chorale	Humbert sings hysterically of his missing daughter and attempts to find her. The boys' choir enters once again with the chorale.	●		●
29. Humbert's Double and Lolita's Letter	<i>Singspiel</i> ; chorale	Three years later, Humbert receives Lolita's letter, which she speaks over music. The choir of basses reappears to condemn his actions yet again.	●		●
30. Meeting after Three Years	duet	Humbert and Lolita meet after three years. They sing of their various experiences.	●		
10. Sinfonia III	orchestral interlude	Includes Lolita's grief leitmotif, as well as the music of the advertising girls, the theme of the road.	N/A	N/A	N/A
11. The Murder of Quilty	duet	Humbert finds Quilty and sentences him to death. He shoots him with his pistol.		●	
12. Epilogue (Lullaby)	ensemble	The boys' choir sings their chorale; Lolita joins them. Humbert muses about his sin. The advertising girls and choir of basses join in, faintly singing their own music. All fades to silence.	●	●	●

enthusiasm that seeps from the page in multiple colours of highlighting, circles, and exclamation points – all unusual for the composer’s draft style – suggests Shchedrin believed he had found the secret key that unlocked the true meaning of the novel, that it is not just a novel, but a moral fable. His understanding of a theological underpinning in the novel is further demonstrated by a legend he sketched which links events in the novel with relevant biblical passages:

Pulling out the Lining of Nabokov:

Everything should be interpreted through a biblical prism

-parables (pg. 108)

-the court (and the electric chair) – biblical (! 12 apostles)

-the chorale – biblical (minus the modern music for the ghost)

-the plot – biblical (albeit detective)

-temptation / the devil – biblical (from Adam and Eve)

- Drive-in – dies ire (the terrible judgment) – biblical

-electric chair – crucifixion on the cross with nails of pain<sup>110</sup>

While each of these categories in Shchedrin’s biblical roadmap merits analysis, a complete taxonomy is beyond the scope of this chapter. I will therefore focus on the chorale as a representative example to demonstrate how it resituates the narrative of Nabokov’s novel in a biblical framework. God is hidden in plain sight right from the outset of Shchedrin’s *Lolita*. Immediately after the overture and opening scene, which features Humbert on trial, a children’s choir appears in the shadow of a cathedral singing the ‘Hail Mary’. The chorus then appears at four other pivotal moments in the opera: after Humbert’s first rape of Lolita, after Lolita’s first attempt to escape, when Lolita goes missing and Humbert devolves into frenzy, and finally, in the epilogue.<sup>111</sup> In each case, the chorus functions as a trigger to move the audience from the first or second plane into the third plane: it sets the unfolding events against a divine reference point. Instead of being privy to Humbert’s thought process, as we are in the novel, we are confronted with an alternative perspective of the events.

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<sup>110</sup> RGALI, f. 3267, o. 2, ed.kh. 36: 34 R.

<sup>111</sup> Rodion Shchedrin, *Lolita: Opera in Two Acts, Vocal Score by the Composer* (Berlin: Schott, 1992), 19, 244, 266, 315.

It is revealing to compare Nabokov's and Shchedrin's interpretation of the moment in the novel when Humbert becomes Lolita's lover. Humbert has drugged and kidnapped Lolita and brought her to a hotel, where the scene opens with Lolita drifting in and out of consciousness. Nabokov riddles this passage with a slew of slippery arguments to depict Humbert's self-justification of his behaviour. Humbert's tactic is to dialogically transform himself into the victim, thus shifting blame to others. For example, he first complains that the sleeping drug does not work as he expects, and he ponders, 'Whether the Ramsdale doctor was a shrewd old rogue, does not, and did not, really matter. What mattered was that I had been deceived.'<sup>112</sup> When describing how the consummation transpired, he continues, 'I am going to tell you something very strange: it was she who seduced me.'<sup>113</sup> Humbert thus establishes himself as someone who has been wronged: he has been deceived and seduced. But he proceeds by setting up his moral rightness by suggesting that regardless of whose initiative the relationship was, he is not so far off from custom: 'The stipulation of the Roman law, according to which a girl may marry at twelve, was adopted by the church, and is still preserved, rather tacitly, in some United States. And fifteen is lawful everywhere.'<sup>114</sup> As this passage demonstrates, the novel allows us into the mind of Humbert, and we are invited into the battle with the protagonist's own logic. One might even posit that the thrust of Nabokov's novel is the very ambiguity of how to interact with Humbert's lines of reasoning. The reader asks, is the author suggesting this is justifiable? Is the author condemning the act but exonerating the actor? Is it all an exercise by which the reader ought not to be taken in? The point is in asking these questions.

In the opera, however, Shchedrin removes the ambiguity and leaves only condemnation. This transposition happens in two ways: first, Humbert's mind is effectively closed to the

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<sup>112</sup> Vladimir Nabokov, *Lolita* (London: Penguin Classics, 2000), 86.

<sup>113</sup> *Ibid*, 89.

<sup>114</sup> *Ibid*, 90.

watchers. Second, the audience is confronted with a point of reference by which to judge the events: a group of children praying. On the first point, Irina Ias'kevich has argued that the removal of Humbert's internal narration irremediably simplifies the character: by omitting the psychological gymnastics and self-justifications that Nabokov plants in Humbert's mind throughout the novel, and focusing only on the outward consequences of his sin, the moral battle between the reader/watcher and protagonist is lost.<sup>115</sup> What Ias'kevich does not consider, however, is that Shchedrin did attempt to include Humbert's internal moral struggle, but with music, not words. Next to one of his drafts of the score, he noted, 'NB: the music should all of the time be mysterious, cautious, and should foreshadow a Bad End (after all this is the story of H.H!)'.<sup>116</sup> In other words, the reason for the monotone, anxious character of the music which pervades the opera is that the musical substance is revealing to the audience the mind of Humbert. The problem with translating the elegant, deceitful prose of Humbert's mind into music, however, is an obvious one: the nuance of thought is lost, and what is left is only a general sense of anxiety. Ultimately, Shchedrin's transposition of thought to music was not entirely successful in this instance.

The second transposition which condemns Humbert is the choir. Shchedrin establishes an immediately audible contrast between the sonic world of Humbert's mind, that is, the atonal, bass-heavy orchestration, and that of the chorus, which sings pure intervals (fourths and fifths) accompanied by a transparent texture of violins only. (See Figure 1) While the chorus sing a phrase of the Hail Mary, *Sancta Maria, ora pro nobis* (Holy Mary, pray for us), a descant solo from above pierces through, singing the words *Mater Dei* (Mother of God). Most strikingly to the ear, however, is the fact that on the word 'ora' (pray) the chorus sings a simple, major triad. This is the only simple major harmony in the entire four-

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<sup>115</sup> Irina Georgievna Ias'kevich. "'Lolita': roman Vladimira Nabokova i opera Rodiona Shchedrina (k voprosu ob interpretatsii literaturnogo proizvedeniia v sovremennoi opere)', *Vestnik Novosibirskogo gosudarstvennogo teatral'nogo instituta*, 1 (2009): 61-9.

<sup>116</sup> RGALI, f. 3267, o. 2, ed.kh. 36: 34 R. Emphasis original.

hour opera, which endows a significance to the word 'pray'. It becomes both an instruction

### 3. Chorale 3. Хорал

19

*(Children's choir in the cathedral gallery)*  
*(Детский хор на клиросе собора)*

Moderato (♩ = 88 - 84)

V. ni.  
Стр. sosp.  
*pp*

Fl. Vc.  
*ppp*

*sempre (al fine)*

CHILDREN'S CHOIR (Discanti, Alto)  
ДЕТСКИЙ ХОР (мальчики) *pp*

ad lib. Sancta Ma n

o ra

pro te bis

o ra

Figure 1 *Lolita*, No. 3, Chorale, p. 19-20

and a beacon of hope. The choir is not only a conceptual contrast, therefore, but a sonic one. The infrequency of recognisable, simple chords in this opera renders the listener particularly poised to catch these anomalies, and they certainly function as a moment of otherworldly texture in comparison to the rest of the material. Here, the major triad adds a note of hope to the prayer itself. Shchedrin was not the first to use simple chords to arrest attention, especially with spiritual connotations. Just a few years earlier, Gubaidulina had employed major triads to symbolise heavenly principles in her religious suite ‘Seven Words’ (1982).<sup>117</sup> And there is a deeper historical precedent. Moments like these also harken back to the earlier symbolist poetics of Béla Bartók and his uses of ‘tonalities of light and darkness’ in his opera *Bluebeard’s Castle*, where major or minor tonalities synchronise with the moral trajectory of the plot.<sup>118</sup> And finally, this is one of the many connections with Berg’s *Lulu*, which I will explain in due course, where brief interjections of tonality and simple triads serve as identifying features in the leitmotifs for certain primary characters: for instance, A minor as indicative of Alwa and A major as indicative of Dr. Schön.<sup>119</sup>

The choir always sings the same text upon every entry, and this text is an instance in which Shchedrin inserted material into Nabokov’s story, rather than adapting from it. The words of ‘Chorale’, are taken from a phrase of the Hail Mary prayer: *Sancta Maria, ora pro nobis* (Holy Mary, pray for us). This line is interspersed with a descant solo from above singing *Mater Dei* (Mother of God). Together, these two vocal lines make up no more than a fragment, albeit a recognisable one, of the prayer.

The following is the entire prayer; the underlined sections are what Shchedrin includes.

*Hail Mary, full of grace,  
The Lord is with thee.  
Blessed art thou among women,  
and blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus.*

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<sup>117</sup> Levon Hakobian, *Music of the Soviet Era, 1917-1987* (London: Routledge, 2017), 279-81.

<sup>118</sup> Philip Weller, ‘Symbolist Opera: trials, triumphs, tributaries’, in *The Cambridge Companion to Twentieth Century Opera* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005): 60-84. 70.

<sup>119</sup> Douglas Jarman, *Alban Berg: Lulu* (Cambridge: University Press, 2008), 70.

*Holy Mary, Mother of God,  
pray for us sinners, now,  
and at the hour of our death. Amen.*<sup>120</sup>

There are two features of this selection which demand explanation: first, the focus on Mary, and second, Shchedrin's choice to render the prayer in Latin. Shchedrin left a clue in a scribbled note on the jacket of one of his sketchbooks. In a list of characters in the opera, he included underneath Lolita's name, 'Anti-pornography: a parable about the Madonna'.<sup>121</sup> The construction of this phrase suggests that Shchedrin incorporated imagery of and references to Mary in order to counter the pornographic elements of the plot of *Lolita*. But the invocation of Mary could have other implications as well. In Russian Orthodoxy, Mary not only models virginity, but also 'mediates God to the world in Christ'.<sup>122</sup> Invoking Mary, therefore, is considered a first step to approaching Christ, an appeal to a saint who can act as an intermediary between people (in this case Lolita and Humbert) and God. But the prayer only appears in fragment. Shchedrin curtailed the words before the use of 'sinners' (*peccatoribus*). What remains is, 'pray for us', without a qualifier for 'us'. In this way, Shchedrin signals the reality of divine truth but avoids infusing these categories with doctrinal or judgmental content.

While Mary is central in Russian Orthodox iconography, however, the Hail Mary is not a standard feature of the Eastern rite.<sup>123</sup> In addition, the fact that the prayer is sung in Latin in the opera makes it immediately identifiable with the Roman Catholic tradition, rather than the Orthodox tradition. Shchedrin explained in an interview that he chose this because Latin is more universal, but he may also have been seeking to avoid political connotations.<sup>124</sup> Since the Russian Orthodox Church has been inexorably intertwined with the state since the schism of

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<sup>120</sup> *Britannica Academic*, s.v. 'Hail Mary', <http://academic.eb.com/levels/collegiate/article/Hail-Mary/38808>.

<sup>121</sup> RGALI, f. 3267, op. 2, ed.kh. 36, 1.

<sup>122</sup> Frances Young, 'The Church and Mary', *Ecclesiology* 5, no. 3 (2009): 276-98. 286, 295.

<sup>123</sup> Mariamna Fortounatto and Mary Cunningham, 'The Theology of the Icon', in *The Cambridge Companion to Orthodox Christian Theology*, ed. Mary Cunningham and Elizabeth Theokritoff (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008): 136-49. 143.

<sup>124</sup> Interview with author, 27 March 2018.

1652, and even throughout the twentieth century was often wielded by the Soviet government as a political tool, Shchedrin would have needed to untangle the appeal to Mary from the context of a state church if he wanted to maintain a solely religious – and not a political – association.<sup>125</sup> By rendering the prayer in Latin in a Russian opera, Shchedrin maintains emphasis on the divine rather than on confessional identity. This also conforms to the trend in twentieth émigré Orthodox theology of prioritising catholicity, or ‘togetherness’ (*sobornost*) rather than the differences between denominations.<sup>126</sup> In other words, Shchedrin chose the most universal, least politically charged connection to Mary that he could find; he kept his focus on the parable of ‘anti-pornography’ by setting up Mary as a symbol of virginal purity and an intermediary rather than as a political or doctrinal statement. This attraction to catholicity was one of the many new horizons opened to him in his position as an émigré in Europe.

### **Between East and West: Alban Berg as the inspiration for Perestroika opera**

If the structure of Shchedrin’s *Lolita* was a radical, biblical reinterpretation of what many have considered a pornographic novel, the choice of text and music were both inspired by an earlier model: Alban Berg. But why would Berg be such an important influence on Shchedrin, and why at this moment? Berg’s influence was dispersed in two ways: his style mediated through his influence on Russian modernism; and his operas themselves, in particular, *Lulu*. To the first point, it is perhaps only natural that after writing *Dead Souls*, an opera so inspired by Shostakovich’s *The Nose*, Shchedrin’s next opera would then reach back to the operas that themselves inspired *The Nose*. He was grasping for the roots of the techniques and

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<sup>125</sup> Aleksei Makarin, ‘The Russian Orthodox Church: Competing Choices’ *Russian Politics and Law* 49, no. 1 (2011): 8-23. 8; see also Paul Meyendorff, *Russia, Ritual, and Reform: the Liturgical Reforms of Nikon in the 17th Century* (Crestwood, N.Y.: St Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1991); Robert O. Crummey, *Old Believers in a Changing World* (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 2011), 12.

<sup>126</sup> John Jillions, ‘Orthodox Theology in the West: The Ecumenical Challenge’, in *The Cambridge Companion to Orthodox Christianity*: 276-92. 281.

styles that had begun to capture his attention after he abandoned Socialist Realism in the late 1960s.<sup>127</sup> And yet, Shchedrin's exposure to Berg's operas would have been limited for much of his career. The Second Viennese School appeared on Soviet stages only briefly: after short runs of productions of Berg's operas in Leningrad in the 1920s, his work (and the work of Franz Schrecker and Arnold Schoenberg) disappeared from the Russian repertoire; at the Bolshoi Theatre at least, I could not find any records of Berg productions during the Soviet period.<sup>128</sup> Even so, Berg's legacy lived on, mediated through Russian modernism: Shostakovich's *The Nose* and *Lady Macbeth of Mtsensk* were both indebted to Berg; *Wozzeck*, especially, served as both a model and a source of parody for *The Nose*, an opera which was in the forefront of Shchedrin's attention in the 1970s, as I have explored in Chapter 2.<sup>129</sup> Whether Shchedrin realised it or not, therefore, his exploration of Berg's techniques had already begun when he delved into the operas of Shostakovich.

Shchedrin's explicit interest in Berg, however, seems to have germinated in the late 1970s. In 1976, he wrote the introduction to a book on Berg's staged works which demonstrates a broad and deep familiarity with Berg's music.<sup>130</sup> By the 1980s, he was gaining increasing exposure to the Western world and to the music being performed on the other side of the Iron Curtain. He was certainly aware of the premiere of the first completed version of *Lulu* in 1979 at the Paris Opera under Pierre Boulez: it was a highly anticipated musical event globally, and as the Soviet Union was no longer isolated from such news, Shchedrin would have read about it and had conversations with colleagues about it (and it is also remarkable that *Lolita* was

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<sup>127</sup> See Chapter 2 for a discussion of the influence of *The Nose* in Shchedrin's *Dead Souls*. For a discussion of the influence of Berg and the modernist Germans over Shostakovich, see Katerina Clark, *Petersburg, Crucible of Cultural Revolution* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1995), 227-8.

<sup>128</sup> While these repertoire statistics from RGALI are incomplete, no other references from contemporaneous journals or newspapers mention a Berg opera at the Bolshoi either. RGALI, f. 648, o. 19, ed.kh 339; f. 648, o.19, ed.kh. 344: 7-8; f. 648, o. 19. ed.kh. 351: 1; f. 648, o. 19, ed.kh. 363: 1; f. 648, o. 19, ed.kh. 373: 4.

<sup>129</sup> Esti Sheinberg, *Irony, Satire, Parody and the Grotesque in the Music of Shostakovich: A Theory of Musical Incongruities* (London: Routledge, 2017), 164-5, 332.

<sup>130</sup> See Rodion Shchedrin, Forward to M. Tarakanov, *Muzykal'nyi teatr Al'bana Berga* (Moscow: Sovetskii kompozitor, 1976): 5-12.

scheduled to be premiered by the very same company that premiered *Lulu*). By the early 1980s, Shchedrin was not just aware of, but completely absorbed with, the composer. In his 1983 ‘*Muzykal’noe prinoshenie*’ (‘Musical Offering’), written in celebration of Bach’s 300<sup>th</sup> birthday, he included three musical monograms: his own, Bach’s, and Berg’s.<sup>131</sup> A year later, the preoccupation still endured, to the point that he included Berg in his own musical autobiography. His 1984 composition, titled ‘*Aftoportret*’ (‘Self-portrait’), was meant to be his credo; he composed it for himself, with no commission, for his own fiftieth birthday (albeit two years late). Once again, he included only three monograms: his own, Bach’s, and Berg’s. If any further evidence is needed that Berg, and particularly *Lulu*, was on Shchedrin’s mind as he composed *Lolita*, the *Symphonic Pieces* should suffice to seal the question: like Berg, who adapted his opera into a suite titled *Symphonic Pieces from Lulu*, in five movements, Shchedrin did the same for *Lolita*, also in five movements with the same movement structures. Like Berg, he seems to have turned to this option in order to monetise some of his musical ideas from the opera, but money cannot be the only reason for such striking parallels.<sup>132</sup>

Such clear evidence of Shchedrin’s preoccupation with Berg’s music during this period justifies conjecture that the Russian might have identified with other facets of his Austrian predecessor’s life as well. Particularly, their life circumstances and choice of subject matter for their operas reveal additional parallels. Berg began composing *Lulu* in the 1920s during what was a brief bubble of relative artistic freedom: the censorship of the war era had been lifted, and the strictures of the new Nazi government put in place after the *Machtergreifung* (seizure of power) in 1933 were still unimaginable. Berg seized the moment and selected one of the most controversial German-language plays in the literature as the subject for his new opera. Strictly speaking, there were two plays, Frank Wedekind’s *Erdegeist* (*Earth Spirit*) and *Die*

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<sup>131</sup> Kholopova and Shchedrin, *Put*, 142.

<sup>132</sup> Margaret Notley, ‘Berg’s Propaganda Pieces: The ‘Platonic Idea’ of *Lulu*’, *Journal of Musicology* 25, no. 2 (2008): 98.

*Büschel der Pandora (Pandora's Box)*. When the latter received its premiere in Nuremberg in 1904, it immediately ruffled feathers and was dragged before three different courts. The court which found the harshest ruling against Berg said the play submitted the reader to 'a quite inexhaustible flow of sexual filth', and anyone whose 'perception of propriety and impropriety in sexual matters' was that 'prevailing amongst the vast majority of the German people as a whole' would be offended by having 'been caused to feel disgust, revulsion, and nausea'.<sup>133</sup> Wedekind and his publisher were released, but only on the condition that all copies of the play be destroyed, and in the future suppressed.<sup>134</sup> Even so, private performances continued to take place in Vienna, and it was one of these that Berg attended in 1905.<sup>135</sup> By the 1920s, the ban had been lifted, but many people still frowned on such blatant displays of sexuality on stage, and it was undoubtedly still an intentionally provocative choice on Berg's part. The parallel to Shchedrin and his choice of Nabokov is striking: Shchedrin, like Berg, chose the most provocative material he could possibly find, material that had already been proven to draw attention to itself through scandal. And if Shchedrin was considering the history of *Lulu*, perhaps he also wondered whether Perestroika might similarly be only a narrow window when he could write such a work before a darker power might emerge.

Berg had a specific idea of the arc of the drama and musical structure of *Lulu* before beginning to compose. The power of *Lulu*'s story was in the symmetry of her rise to the summit of bourgeois society and the subsequent plummet into the depths of prostitution. The palindrome includes her ascent coupled with her three lovers in the first half, the film music as the symbolic centre, and then the descent coupled with three clients, who are doubled by the singers who play her lovers in the first half.<sup>136</sup> Shchedrin was, by his own admission, captivated

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<sup>133</sup> Jarman, *Alban Berg, Lulu*, 18.

<sup>134</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>135</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>136</sup> *Ibid.*, 57.

by the structure of *Lulu*, and by the hidden meanings ‘behind the frivolity of certain scenes.’<sup>137</sup> Shchedrin’s structure is similar – he envisions the events that are chronologically first and the events that are chronologically second encroaching upon each other and meeting at a metaphysical middle. On one page of his drafts, he specified the schema into which the various sections fit into the overall opera. He divided the page in two columns: on one side he wrote ‘Love [in English] – from the beginning [in Russian]’ with an arrow pointing upwards. And at the top of the other column, he noted ‘the court – from the end’ [in Russian].<sup>138</sup> In the ‘love’ column, he placed all of the first-plane events, and also some musical ideas. For example:

- desire, a dream,
- 1) The declaration about the nymphet
  - 2) I am a spider, a pearl spider. Lolita, where are you?
    - a. Dzik duet
    - b. Haze – telephone
    - c. Swiss [unreadable word]
    - d. Haze – telephone (concerned with herself)
  - 3) Carmen, Carmen, Carmen, amen. (Seduction throughout the duet)<sup>139</sup>

Similarly, the scenes where Humbert defends himself to the court, and the lyrics of the court, are described in the parallel column. The formulation continues, describing the rest of the opera, and placing the various scenes into columns. Thus, from the beginning, love is descending; judgment is coming up from the other end of time to meet it. The inflection point in Shchedrin’s schema, where the various timelines of the scenes meet at a middle point is No. 19, ‘Sinfonia II’, which combines musical elements of all of the major characters and the major emotional leitmotifs (Humbert’s lust, Lolita’s grief). *Lolita*’s structure, however, is the opposite of *Lulu*’s. *Lulu* consists of an ascent, a frozen moment, and a descent. *Lolita* consists of descent, a frozen moment, followed by an ascent, whereby Shchedrin ‘rescues’ Lolita and places her in heaven.

The musical core of *Lolita* is built on a handful of techniques that are foreign to the Socialist Realist operas of the 1970s, and to Shchedrin’s two prior operas; rather, Shchedrin

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<sup>137</sup> Shchedrin, Forward to *Muzykal’nyi*, 9.

<sup>138</sup> RGALI, f. 3267, op. 2, ed.kh. 36, p. 34. L.

<sup>139</sup> Ibid.

seems to have acquired from Berg's *Lulu* and Violin Concerto. First, Shchedrin's grand symmetrical structure (of the meeting of love and judgment) relies on far-reaching roles of rhythm, metre, and tempo to manipulate the perception of time and spiritual plane, as Berg did with *Lulu*'s palindromic form.<sup>140</sup> Second, his incorporation of leitmotifs goes beyond occasional usage: rather, like in *Lulu*, almost all of the musical material is built of leitmotifs, creating a remarkably flexible and semantically rich fabric of musical units, which can then combine in a limitless number of permutations. Finally, Shchedrin uses diegetic music in ways directly modelled on *Lulu*.

In *Lolita*, metre serves to musically delineate the planes. Lolita's motif, the boys' choir, and the choir of basses, though including diverse melodic and harmonic material, are united by their distended, augmented metres – primarily 8/4, 5/4 (sometimes written as 2/2, but with phrase lengths that give them the feeling of distended metre). Their tempi range from crotchet equals 54 to 84, from 'moderato' to 'moderato con moto', as Shchedrin classifies them.<sup>141</sup> Each of these characters is affiliated in some way with the spiritual dimension, and the metres in turn provide a sense of expanse and stasis in each case that provides a contrast to the pulse-driven, dense rhythmic textures of the other characters and planes. The scenes focused on human actions tend to be built of compound metre in tempi marked quicker than moderato. Lolita's dancing theme, which emphasises her childhood and humanity, and the themes of the advertising girls all take place in lively dance metres; scenes with Charlotte are in 4/8 or 4/4. The effect of Shchedrin's structure is to expand and shrink senses of time and space (which I explain below with Lolita's motif's and the boys' choir). Berg's schema is admittedly more complex, as in *Lulu* there are strict tempo relations between each scene, but the effect is similar: *Lulu* manipulates the audience's sense of time by systematically associating different metres

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<sup>140</sup> Alan Street, 'Expression and construction: the stage works of Schoenberg and Berg' in *The Cambridge Companion to Twentieth-Century Opera*, ed. Mervyn Cooke (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 102.

<sup>141</sup> See Shchedrin, *Lolita*, 1, 19, 174.

with different characters, and different tempi relations with important transitions in action.<sup>142</sup> *Lolita*, therefore, is less formally structured, but still an imitation of these principles.

*Lolita* is characterised musically by several sets of leitmotifs that pose a challenging, contradictory identity: she is both sacred and profane, a victim and a participant. Her primary character leitmotif opens the opera: it is built of an ascending major seventh chord followed by a whole-tone tetrachord. It is introduced by harp and violins (playing harmonics). (Figure 2)



Figure 2 *Lolita*: Lolita's leitmotif, p. 1.

This is a leitmotif of multivalent significance. At least three layers can be parsed from this unit: 1) the borrowing from Alban Berg's violin concerto; 2) the more straightforward significance of the extreme range and the evocative instrumentation; 3) and more speculatively, I read the spreading of the partials as a connection to the divine à la Jean-Philippe Rameau's *corps sonore*. Finally, this is the first example of metre manipulating a sense of time in the opera.

The first layer of symbolism in this four-bar phrase is its connection to Berg: *Lolita*'s leitmotif thematically alludes to, and musically copies, the opening of Berg's violin concerto, a piece that Shchedrin was familiar with and openly admired.<sup>143</sup> The composition history of the concerto draws parallels with *Lolita*. In the middle of orchestrating *Lulu* in 1935, Berg received a commission for a violin concerto, which he began working on in a lacklustre fashion until tragedy struck: Manon Gropius, the seventeen-year-old daughter of Alma Mahler, a dear

<sup>142</sup> Douglas Jarman, 'Some Rhythmic and Metric Techniques in Alban Berg's "Lulu"', *Musical Quarterly* 56, no. 3 (1970): 349-66. 359.

<sup>143</sup> Shchedrin, Forward to *Muzykal'nyi*, 6.

friend of his, had died after a struggle with polio.<sup>144</sup> This event transformed his engagement with the piece. Imagining the concerto as a requiem for the young girl, he gained a new fire to finish the work, and inscribed it ‘to the memory of an angel’.<sup>145</sup> As this music is Berg’s lament over the untimely death of a beautiful child, it is fitting that Shchedrin chose the main series of the violin solo line as the basis for Lolita’s leitmotif. (See Figures 2 and 3)

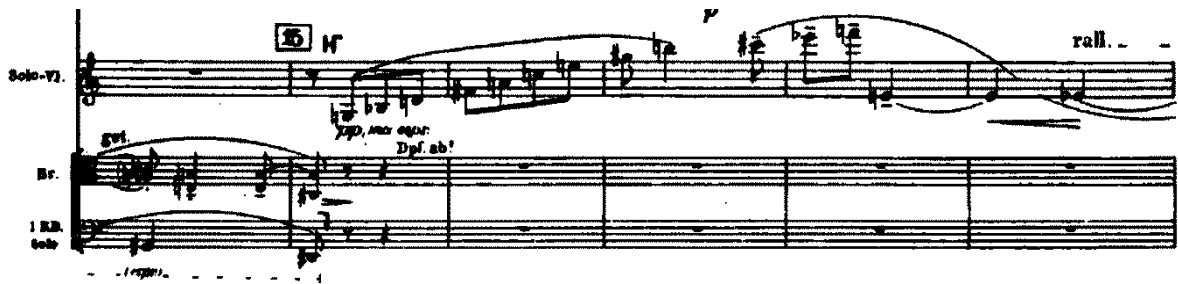


Figure 3 Alban Berg, Violin Concerto, bars 14-19

There are also more obvious features to draw connections with in the Lolita leitmotif: namely, extreme range and symbolic instrumentation. Lolita is played by a coloratura soprano, and as such occupies a range which sets her apart from other characters. The range is literally too high for any other singer in the opera to approach. The range itself, therefore, serves as a protective barrier: even if she is abused and controlled by her mother, Humbert, Quilty, and others throughout the story, her ontological qualities, represented by this theme, cannot be touched. Her music cannot be encroached upon because she occupies her own aural and metaphysical space, delineated by her *Fach* and *tessitura*. She later sings the motif which introduces her, sometimes two full octaves above the other parts which are being sung simultaneously. But her uniqueness in this opera does not mean this type of delineation is unique in opera history, especially when combined with the uses of harp and violin. This instrument pairing appears frequently throughout the Russian ballet repertoire in combination with images of victimised women: perhaps the most famous example of this combination is

<sup>144</sup> Anthony Pople, *Berg: Violin Concerto* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 27.

<sup>145</sup> Pople, *Berg*, 28.

Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov's *Scheherazade*. The opening theme for solo violin, punctuated by chords in the harp, introduces the heroine, who is both perpetrator and victim of her own tragic, romantic fate. Then there is the Odile variation in Piotr Tchaikovsky's *Swan Lake*, Nikia's death in Ludwig Minkus' *La Bayadere*, even Minkus' Kitri's variation in *Don Quixote* – all of which feature this pairing.

The final, albeit more speculative reading, of Lolita's motif is her connection to the divine by participation in the *corps sonore*. Rameau based his *corps sonore* theory on the idea that any vibrating system, such as a string, would emit harmonic partials above its fundamental frequency.<sup>146</sup> According to this idea, the key intervals to include were the octave, twelfth, and major seventeenth.<sup>147</sup> Rooted in deistic French Enlightenment thought, he became obsessed with the notion that these sequences were the bedrock of all music, and extended beyond science and into the divine.<sup>148</sup> They not only symbolically, but physically, lifted human experience into the supernatural realm. In Rameau's music, the *corps sonore* comes to represent metaphysical transformation, and in addition often symbolises magic, light, or enlightenment.<sup>149</sup> The brightest example comes from his 1748 opera *Pygmalion*. When the god Cupid finally accedes to Pygmalion's prayer and stone is transformed into flesh, G major suddenly gives way to a radiant E major chord (with no preparation) in which Rameau spells out the partials according to his own principles of the *corps sonore*.<sup>150</sup> It is unexpected and unprecedented from anywhere else in the work or from earlier operas. Rameau did not adhere rigidly to his own standards, however, and even in his own work did not always spell out the complete overtone series. But absolute adherence was not necessary: he aimed to create only

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<sup>146</sup> Thomas Christensen, 'Eighteenth-Century Science and the "Corps Sonore": The Scientific Background to Rameau's Principle of Harmony', *Journal of Music Theory* 31, no. 1 (1987): 23-50. 23.

<sup>147</sup> Ibid 26.

<sup>148</sup> Ibid, 24.

<sup>149</sup> Geoffrey Burgess, 'Enlightening Harmonies: Rameau's *corps sonore* and the Representation of the Divine in the *tragédie en musique*', *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 65, no. 2 (2012): 383-462. 410.

<sup>150</sup> Ibid, 407.

‘an artistic representation of the acoustic phenomenon’.<sup>151</sup> Lolita’s leitmotif contains a link to the spelling out of partials: over the four bars of the leitmotif, the octave, twelfth, and major seventeenth sound in the harp and violins, and the resonance reaches into the transcendent, beyond even what the human ear can hear. This means that from the outset, there is something divine and mystical about Lolita, even if her presentation on stage can later be either whimsical or vulgar. But there may also be a hint of sadness in this expansion into eternity: Jonathan Cross has argued that while Rameau encountered the divine using this method, the modernists employed the *corps sonore* to find liminal spaces, and sometimes point to a sense of loss that accords with the ‘loss of faith in what modernity could ultimately achieve.’<sup>152</sup> Both intuitions about the *corps sonore* – the hope of the divine and the failure of modernity – are encompassed in Lolita’s leitmotif. In an interview, Shchedrin confirmed Rameau’s influence in this passage, mentioning that he had thought about *Pygmalion*, but was unwilling to comment on any direct borrowings.<sup>153</sup> He also affirmed, however, that one of the remarkable features of the *corps sonore* is its ability to encompass both brightness and sadness, both transcendence and loss.<sup>154</sup> While Shchedrin did confirm these ideas when asked in 2020, however, I ought to mention that I have found no other significant references to Rameau in his drafts of notes; I would therefore maintain that I find it an intriguing connection, which may or may not have been intentional on the part of the composer.

Lolita, however, is associated with several other motifs as well. Like in *Lulu*, Shchedrin’s system also includes leitmotifs for ideas. One is the representation of Lolita’s grief. This motif appears constantly at moments of sadness for the girl, for instance, after she sneaks a telephone call to try to escape but is caught by Humbert; when Lolita laments that Humbert

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<sup>151</sup> Ibid.

<sup>152</sup> Jonathan Cross, 'Musical Spectra, l'espace sensible and Contemporary Opera', *Twentieth-Century Music* 15, no. 1 (2018): 103-24. 110.

<sup>153</sup> Interview with author, 4 April 2020.

<sup>154</sup> Ibid.

forces them to hit the road yet again after he thinks Quilty has discovered them; after Humbert receives Lolita's letter informing him she is pregnant and destitute.<sup>155</sup> The motif gives the impression of an inversion of Lolita's motif as it is a descending scale pattern, always starting high in the register with crotchets, and ending with two quavers at the conclusion of the motif, as if stumbling to an end. In addition, this motif is often represented by the flute, one of the instruments symbolic of Humbert's lust, and so the connection of Humbert as the cause of her grief comes into focus. (See Figure 4)

349 Allegretto moderato (♩ = 84-88)  
[in 2]

Lol.  
Лол.

Fl.

*p* (sotto voce)

V-le

*pp*

V-ni  
(con sord.)

*f*

*p*

Figure 4 *Lolita*, Lolita's grief motif, p. 227.

Shchedrin demonstrates the other facets of Lolita's character, however, through other means. He brings the reality of her humanness – and particularly her childhood – to the fore through diegetic music. This music emerges from the flow of the action and is audible to the characters, and Shchedrin employs it in strikingly similar ways to Berg in *Lulu*. In *Lulu*, Berg often sets up uses of particular motifs that begin as diegetic, such as the doorbell, but then includes them later on in non-diegetic uses in order to draw attention to the dramatic connection

<sup>155</sup> Shchedrin, *Lolita*, 227.

of those two moments.<sup>156</sup> Shchedrin similarly establishes Lolita's dancing motif and the telephone motif; both have their first uses when the characters can hear them, but they subsequently return in ways inaudible to the characters, but audible to the audience.

Lolita's dancing motif starts as an instance audible to the characters, but then becomes a signalling device for the audience only. Lolita first sings a nonsense phrase, to which she also dances, in the middle of regaling Humbert about her adventures at camp, which included activities from baking cakes to washing dishes.<sup>157</sup> 'Kip kip Hurray, Hurray', is her refrain, and both hear it.<sup>158</sup> The refrain returns when, after Humbert has abducted Lolita, the two reappear in Beardsley, Lolita's hometown. In this case, a trumpet in the distance plays the theme, and Lolita and others dance in the background – it is music that they all hear, and that represents a happy time for Lolita.<sup>159</sup> Versions of Lolita's dance motif appear when the characters do not hear them, however; notably, at moments when Humbert and Quilty are quarrelling. In the first instance, 'The Pursuit', Quilty comes knocking at the door after Lolita has drugged Humbert with sleeping pills; the strange conversation that proceeds between Quilty and a semi-conscious Humbert is preceded by Lolita's dance motif. Distinguished by its rhythm, which is unique in the opera, it carries the reader back to Lolita's description of camp, and her light-hearted moments in Beardsley.<sup>160</sup> This casts the argument and intentions of these men into stark contrast with the reality of Lolita's childhood. The second time is before Humbert murders Quilty; Lolita's dance motif is audible in the orchestra, as if to implicate both Quilty and Humbert, once again, in ruining the happy childhood moments of this girl.<sup>161</sup> (Figure 5)

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<sup>156</sup> Derek R. Strykowski, 'The Diegetic Music of Berg's *Lulu*: When Opera and Serialism Collide', *Journal of Musicological Research* 35, no. 1 (2016): 1-22. 8.

<sup>157</sup> This motif was not connected to her more dubious activities at camp, such as lovemaking, which she describes later to other music.

<sup>158</sup> Shchedrin, *Lolita*, 62.

<sup>159</sup> *Ibid*, 203.

<sup>160</sup> *Ibid*, 239.

<sup>161</sup> *Ibid*, 299.

186 *Allegro*  $\text{♩} = 120-121$   
 LOLITA goes  
 ЛОЛИТА (УХОДИТ) *ff marc.*

Char. Шар.  
*fp*

Lol.  
*dim.*

Kip, kip, Hur-ray, Hur-ray!  
 Брон-ко-во - е у - па!

(Ob.)

*f/p* *f* *dim.*

Figure 5 *Lolita*, Lolita's dancing motif, p. 62

Shchedrin's telephone motif, however, is the episode that most clearly resembles Berg's use of the doorbell motif in *Lulu*. It appears in its first diegetic uses in Scene 6 and in Scene 8 in innocuous dramatic settings; Charlotte hears the phone ring and answers it, both times to speak to friends about insignificant matters.<sup>162</sup> The phone appears more ominously later, first with the call to announce Charlotte's death to Humbert, and then when Lolita tries to make a phone call for help as she attempts to escape from Humbert.<sup>163</sup> For Humbert, the telephone is always a cause of worry – it is a symbol of bad news, of an intrusion into his created reality with Lolita. It is in this way that a version of the motif returns in its first non-diegetic use, in Scene 28, 'Lolita's Disappearance'. The telephone motif appears here in a distended form, and marks the beginning of nearly every phrase; as Humbert hysterically runs around looking for Lolita and asking if anyone has seen her, the rhythm of the telephone returns to remind him of how she was taken from him: in his estimation, taken by no fault of his own,

<sup>162</sup> Ibid, 35.

<sup>163</sup> Ibid, 109. In the latter instance, Shchedrin tweaks the telephone motif so that it is also associated specifically with Lolita.

but by someone from the outside world.<sup>164</sup> Significantly, the telephone motif appears one last time in a non-diegetic context. When, near the end of the opera, Humbert at last finds Quilty and prepares to kill him in revenge for taking Lolita, the telephone motif returns, unheard by the characters. It rings once right before he shoots, and once right after. The significance is clear: Humbert destroyed, in his mind, the foil of his happiness, which was not so much Quilty himself, but Quilty as a symbol of any outside interference between him and Lolita.<sup>165</sup> (Figure 6)

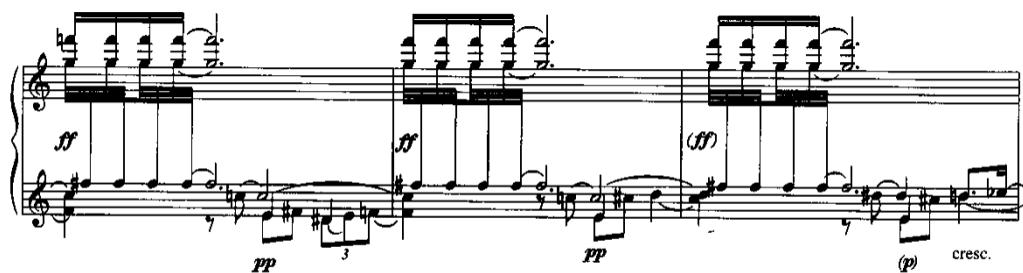


Figure 6 *Lolita*, the telephone motif, alternating demisemiquavers, p. 109

Humbert's leitmotifs are constructed of rhythmic patterns rather than harmonic or melodic patterns, as is the case with many of the other leitmotifs in *Lulu*. These leitmotifs are Wagnerian in the sense that they comprise emotional and semantic association; they are developmental in that they create new musico-dramatic contexts with their appearance; and they contribute to the larger structure.<sup>166</sup> Their physiognomy fundamentally rhythmic rather than melodic, however, represents another connection to Berg: the *Hauptrhythmus* (primary rhythmic cell) was one of his innovations, first in *Wozzeck* and then in *Lulu*, as he was the first composer of the Second Viennese School to rely on rhythmic patterns as self-sufficient motives in opera (though he likely adapted the device from Mahler).<sup>167</sup> Similarly, to my knowledge, this is the

<sup>164</sup> Ibid, 261.

<sup>165</sup> Ibid, 310.

<sup>166</sup> For a more detailed discussion of defining leitmotifs, see Matthew Bribitzer-Stull, *Understanding the Leitmotif: From Wagner to Hollywood Film Music* (Cambridge: University Press, 2015), 11-23.

<sup>167</sup> Douglas Jarman, *Alban Berg, Wozzeck* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 21.

first time a Soviet composer used a rhythmic structure independently of melodic or harmonic material as a leitmotif in opera.<sup>168</sup> In this case, it represents Humbert's lust and conflicting desires, and the base unit is built of three semi-quavers tied to a crotchet, followed by a quaver and another tied crotchet. (See Figure 7) This unit is then distended and contracted as it interacts in polyphonic motion of three flute lines. Like the *Hauptrhythmus* in *Lulu*, which opens and closes each act, and appears at nearly every pivotal plot moment, but is often expanded or shrunk, this rhythm appears at nearly every moment when Humbert's machinations are brought into focus.<sup>169</sup> The effect of the recognisable but unsteady rhythm, not anchored by recurring melodic material, serves to create a sense of multiplicity and anxiety – Humbert is not represented by a single line or musical fragment, but rather, by the conflict of overlapping ideas and interests, held together only by rhythmic identity. (Figure 7)

The image shows a musical score for 'Humbert's Lust leitmotif' from the opera *Lolita*. It consists of two systems of music. The first system is marked '1 Lento assai (♩ = ca 40)'. It features three flute parts: Flute (Fl.), Flute Alto (Fl. alto), and Flute Bass (Fl.). The piano accompaniment is marked 'p dolcissimo'. The flute parts play a rhythmic motif consisting of three eighth notes tied to a quarter note, followed by an eighth note and another quarter note tied to the next. The second system is marked '2' and includes a 'ten.' (tension) marking. The piano accompaniment is marked 'legatiss. sempre' and '(ten.)'. The flute parts continue with the same rhythmic motif, with some parts marked 'legatiss. sempre' and '(ten.)'. The score includes various musical notations such as slurs, ties, and dynamic markings.

Figure 7 *Lolita*, Humbert's Lust leitmotif, p. 7

<sup>168</sup> There is no evidence of such techniques in the operas of Denisov, Molchanov, Taktakishvili, or Karetnikov.

<sup>169</sup> Jarman, 'Some Rhythmic', 350.

## Conclusion

Shchedrin's ultimate reinterpretation of Nabokov is evidenced only in the final scene of the opera, the Epilogue (also titled Lullaby). The children's choir appears with most of the other characters – Humbert, Lolita, the choir of judges, and the advertising girls. There are several musical twists, however, which Shchedrin implemented to reinterpret Nabokov's ending. This time, the cellos (Humbert's instrument) play the Lolita theme from the beginning of the opera – an ascending tetrachord originally expressed by harp and violin, as if to suggest that Lolita is still firmly rooted in Humbert's psyche, and he has not given up his fetish for her, even after the harm he has inflicted on her and others. (Figure 8) The original instrumentation of the Lolita-theme for two harps and violins, which the cello here imitates, is symbolically charged. The harp is the instrument that Shchedrin associates throughout the opera with sex, as is clear by the repeated themes during Humbert's intercourse with both Lolita and her mother, and also in his notebooks, where he writes in multiple locations, 'Main theme for sex: 2 harps'.<sup>170</sup> From the beginning, the instrumentation links Lolita (violin/flute) with sex (harp), but the music itself complicates the picture: the sweeping register spells out the partials, grasping at the infinite. The music crosses all three planes Shchedrin created, linking heavenly to profane to human. When the cello takes over this theme at the end, it seems to be Humbert's voice striving to reach another plane, but failing to reach the extremity of register in the original theme. The motif repeats as an *ostinato*, repeating eight times throughout the scene, with each motif lasting for six measures.

The Lolita theme, played by the Humbert-cello, is overlaid with the children's choir singing the Hail Mary prayer, which is joined finally by Lolita. While this moment does have a root in the novel, Shchedrin's musical interpretation reframes the entire story. In a notebook

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<sup>170</sup> RGALI, f. 3267, o. 2, ed.kh. 36, 150.

490 *p*  
 LOLITA  
 ЛОЛИТА  
 Ma

Hum.  
 Гум.  
 Lo- li ta  
 я Ло- ли та

Dis.  
 solo  
 Ma - ter De - i

D.  
 Coro  
 A.  
 pro - no bis...

Lol.  
 Лол.  
 ter De - i

Hum.  
 Гум.  
 my sin, my soul, fire of my loins.  
 грех мой, смер - мо - ей жиз - ни,

Dis.  
 solo  
 Ma - ter, ma - ter De - i

D.  
 Coro  
 A.

Figure 8 *Lolita*, the cello reiterating the Lolita theme; No.33. Lullaby, p. 316

with drafts of the libretto, Shchedrin scribbled down the following passage from Nabokov's

*Lolita* as the basis of this scene:

Reader! What I heard was but the melody of children at play, nothing but that, and so limpid was the air that within this vapour of blended voices...one could hear now and then, as if

released, an almost articulate spurt of vivid laughter... and then I knew that the hopelessly poignant thing was not Lolita's absence from my side, but the absence of her voice from that concord.<sup>171</sup>

The final irony is that Shchedrin's version of *Lolita* is actually a perversion of this text. The young girl *does* join the concord – her voice sings with the children at the end. In this sense, Shchedrin's Lolita is 'saved' by the divine. She is 'redeemed' by prayer as her voice soars to the heavens. Humbert receives no such redemption.

This strange combination of the sacred and the profane in one opera makes *Lolita* an anomaly of early post-Soviet art. It fits neither into the category of films like *Little Vera* (1988), which presents graphic promiscuity with no commentary, nor into the category of the aestheticism and religious exploration of Gubaidulina and Schnittke. The overall significance of this blueprint is that Shchedrin chose to submit Nabokov's singularly atheistic novel to a religious schema of meaning. If anything, Nabokov's *Lolita* is a plea to show the futility of belief after World War II; Shchedrin, on the other hand, rehabilitated the darkest moments of human suffering and abandonment of common morality by situating them under divine justice. In this way, Shchedrin portrayed what he understood as a crossroads for the Soviet Union: a junction where one road would lead to sanctity, the other to depravity. Whereas *Little Vera* raised questions that it then refused to answer, *Lolita* presented the logical conclusion of where the seeds of depravity might lead – to the vilest forms of abuse of women and children. And as a counter to this picture, he offered religion as the antidote. Forgiveness and purity were possible, but only by turning to the church. This seemed to also be the suggestion of his contemporaries, Schnittke, Gubaidulina, and Denisov, who all wielded their freedom to write

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<sup>171</sup> Nabokov, *Lolita*, 308.

religious masses.<sup>172</sup> And though Shchedrin selected the topic of paedophilia, it was a backhanded way of supporting the turn toward religion in the Soviet Union.<sup>173</sup>

My reading of *Lolita* as a quasi-religious reconfiguration of the novel is reinforced by the latest odd chapter in the opera's history: the St Petersburg premiere. On 13 February 2020, *Lolita* premiered at the Mariinsky Theatre, the first time the opera had been seen at a major theatre in Russia. The interpretation, however, as situated in the stage design and the programme notes, confirms the possibility of seeing *Lolita* the opera as a story of redemption rather than decline. The programme notes take pains to explain in detail that this opera is neither hopeless, nor a reinforcement of atheism. Rather, it argues that it condemns capitalism, materialism, and godlessness, and that the end of the opera proves that 'light and mercy are victorious.'<sup>174</sup> The author insists that this is all possible because 'the composer does what is impossible in the novel: he restores the purity of the "poor buried girl" and in the final Lullaby returns her to the holy choir of children, where together with them she sings the prayer to the Holy Mother.'<sup>175</sup> The notes conclude that this opera establishes Shchedrin as an heir of the Russian literary tradition because of the way he addresses the most important questions there are: 'Russian religion, ethics, and morality: sin, guilt, repentance, redemption'.<sup>176</sup> What these programme notes – and the general acceptance of this interpretation of Nabokov – reveal about trends in contemporary Russian opera is a topic I discuss in Chapter 4.

Finally, I return to one of the questions which puzzled me from the moment I began examining this opera: why Shchedrin would insist, as he did in a letter to Rostropovich, that '[...] the opera is written in Russian, according to the text of a Russian publication, based on a

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<sup>172</sup> See Hakobian, *Music of the Soviet Era*, 269, 277, 278, 284.

<sup>173</sup> For more examples of Soviet censorship in film and opera, see Ronald Bergan, *Sergei Eistenstein: A Life in Conflict* (New York: Arcade Publishing, 2016) or Elizabeth Wilson, *Shostakovich: A Life Remembered* (London: Faber and Faber, 1995) or Clarence Brown, *Mandelstam* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1973).

<sup>174</sup> Printed programme from Mariinsky Theatre performance of *Lolita*, 15.02.2020.

<sup>175</sup> Ibid.

<sup>176</sup> Ibid.

Russian book.<sup>177</sup> It is curious that both agreed that this 1950s, originally English-language novel, would be the epitome of a Russian opera and a Russian theme to present to Paris. My guess is that Shchedrin considered it so apt for modern Russia because he was not thinking of an idealised Russia and its heroes found in nineteenth-century Russian opera, but rather as a reflection of Russia as it was during Perestroika. He drew into the opera the questions which gripped Russia in art and in daily life during the transition: questions of capitalism through the advertising girls, of human justice through the court, and questions about the new freedom *to participate* in religion, and the new freedom *from* Soviet moral constraints. *Lolita* encapsulates the birth pangs of a society entering a new era, and the growing pains of establishing what the new guiding principles of life and society ought to be. Shchedrin left no doubt about which direction he thought society ought to head. And as I will demonstrate, in the next chapter, Shchedrin's conclusions about society and art would become the standards of Putin-era opera.

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<sup>177</sup> RGALI, f. 3267, o. 3, ed.kh. 15. Emphasis original.

## Chapter 4

### Opera After the End: 'Russianist Realism' as the Style of the Twenty-first Century

*'We may let all flowers grow, but in the future we'll only water the ones we like.'*

- Vladimir Medinskii, Minister of Culture of the Russian Federation in reference to the film *'Leviathan'* (*'Leviathan'*), 2015<sup>1</sup>

The guest list and performance programme of the extravagant gala included the 'who's who' of Russian politics and business, as well as international stars of classical music: soprano Anna Netrebko, pianist Denis Matsuev, violinist Leonidas Kavakos, and of course, at the helm of the evening, conductor Valery Gergiev, all introduced by the president of the Russian Federation, Vladimir Putin. It was the opening of the new Mariinsky Theatre (christened 'Mariinsky-2') on 2 May 2013 – up until that point, the most expensive opera house the world had ever seen. To inaugurate the building, a new opera was commissioned to showcase the theatre's technical capabilities. It was Rodion Shchedrin who was tasked with presenting an original opera equal to the occasion: *Levsha (The Lefthander)* premiered at the theatre just three months later. This image captures the three elements that have defined the development of Russian opera in the twenty-first century. It also encompasses the characteristics which marked

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<sup>1</sup> Topnews.Ru, 13.01.15. [http://www.topnews.ru/news\\_id\\_74454.html](http://www.topnews.ru/news_id_74454.html). Accessed 27.03.2020.

the beginning of a new era for Russian performance art in 2012. In this chapter, I will discuss each of these elements, which are first: the official legitimisation of political interference in opera after 2012; second, the growing importance of the physical opera house as a symbol of power in modern Russia; third, the formation of a what I will call ‘Russianist Realism’ – a new, relatively consistent style, that is perceived as national and divergent from trends in Western opera. I spend a significant portion of this chapter away from Shchedrin, setting the scene for the complex set of political, social, and artistic circumstances in which his final two operas were written. Only after establishing the new political parameters for art post-2012, and this new style in Russian opera that emerged, do I draw Shchedrin back into focus. In this context, I discuss how his position and status as a composer rose to unparalleled heights in the twenty-first century, and how his two post-2012 operas establish him as a dominant adherent to, and creator of, Russianist Realism.

In my introduction, I mentioned that my analyses of Shchedrin’s music, and of his role in the development of Soviet and post-Soviet opera, would feature varied methods, including nuanced historical contextualisation, criticism, and close reading of the scores. In the preceding chapters, I featured three operas of Shchedrin and delved into detail on their historical environments and their musical construction and influences. I used extensive archival sources, and have based my claims about the music on the scores and on other primary documents. This chapter, however, requires different sources, and I will be focusing on the first two methods listed – historical contextualisation and criticism. I am now making claims about very recent history, and about a musical trend which is still unfolding; archival sources are not available, and there exists even less scholarly writing on opera in this period than on the preceding forty years. To add to these problems, some of the sources that are available are problematic: news agencies in Russia are often suspect due to inevitable governmental pressures, and interviews with involved parties must be treated with special care for similar reasons. Despite the

difficulties, however, there are still plenty of data available to piece together a coherent picture of the direction Russian opera has travelled over the past twenty years, and the direction in which I believe it is still headed. In particular, there are the operas themselves, the facts of where, when, and why they were premiered, and with which artistic collaborators; then there is the matter of the government's response to such premieres (whether adding or subtracting funding, or making or denying official comment), as well as the response of the local and international artistic communities.

As a result, I address each of the three elements separately. In Part I, I digress from the study of opera in particular to elucidate the evolving framework of political involvement in culture from 2000 to 2018, basing my research on publicly accessible government policy documents, Kremlin meeting transcripts, speeches, and select news sources. Presenting a broad overview of policy changes, as well as the details of state interference in various forms of cultural production is necessary to situate opera – and eventually Shchedrin – in the greater cultural dialogue. I will argue that 2000-2012 was a relatively uninhibited window of time during which opera houses were free to experiment, but that in 2012, increased levels of government interference arose.<sup>2</sup> I then analyse the status of the opera house in modern Russia by shedding light on recent building projects, and by examining the finances and the geography, suggest that the opera house in modern Russia is oriented toward raising the nation's profile internationally rather than serving locals and citizens. In Part II, I explore the significant operas of the post-Soviet period: the fourth of Shchedrin's operas that I examine in this thesis, *Rozhdestvenskaia skazka* (*A Christmas Tale*, 2015), and the seven other significant premieres between 2012-2020. I examine how these eight operas together comprise the formation of

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<sup>2</sup> In this, I disagree slightly with the analysis of S.P. Hillen, who cites Putin's initial ascendancy to the presidency as the initiation of the 'conservative-authoritarian' rhetoric which had such significant ramifications for art. As I explain, I argue that this rhetoric primarily spiked after 2012. See S. P. Hillen, *Nationalism and Its Discontents: Transformations of Identity in Contemporary Russian Music on and off the Web* (Proquest Dissertations & Theses Global, Arizona State University, 2020), 2.

Russianist Realism, a term of my own that comprises four criteria: musical melodicism and intelligibility, a text originating from Russian literature or distant history, a production aesthetic that mixes period elements with modern twists, and a limited amount of tolerated political satire. Because I will be dealing with eight separate operas, rather than analysing each of the scores – a project beyond the scope of a single chapter – I will be analysing the reception of each opera, and the rhetoric around it, as well as the fundamental production aesthetics. In analysing how the composers and the theatres position these operas, and how critics, audiences, and government functionaries respond, a clear picture forms of what criteria are expected in a modern Russian opera: similar phrases appear over and over in reviews, as do similar production elements which all indicate a kind of opera, and a certain visual aesthetic, that has been deemed permissible. This coherence of style is a victory that the Soviets never quite achieved with Socialist Realism despite hearty attempts, as I have shown in the previous chapters, but that seems to be coming to fruition thirty years later. Finally, I bring Shchedrin's post-Soviet operas into dialogue with the emerging political pressures, and with the style of Russianist Realism that I established in Parts I and II.

## **Part I: Opera and Politics in Modern Russia**

The 1990s was a decade of confusion and transition for all of Russia. As state ownership of all industries dissolved, many of the institutions that had been the backbone of the Russian economy shifted from state-run to privately owned and managed, and the economy was flung into free fall.<sup>3</sup> The result of privatisation was a complete reorganisation of the nation's resources: massive financial/industrial groups formed, focused on oil and the production of other raw materials, which then became linked with the banks, a situation that led to pervasive

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<sup>3</sup> V. Leksin, 'Russia Before, During, and After the Global Crisis', *Problems of Economic Transition* 53, no. 7 (2010): 3-36. 5.

cronyism and the establishment of a class of oligarchs who controlled a vast proportion of the country's gross domestic product.<sup>4</sup> The arts faced analogous upheaval. In the Soviet period, musical life was held in all but a monopoly by the state, which controlled the flow of new commissions, allocation of resources to composers, and even entry to the profession via the Composers Union.<sup>5</sup> In 1992, however, legislation was passed that guaranteed individual rights to found cultural organisations at home and abroad, and the monopoly was broken: musicians would now need to become entrepreneurs.<sup>6</sup> State funding decreased for culture in turn. Between 1992 and 1994, the level of funding is estimated to have decreased by 14%, but by the end of the 1990s, public funding for art was less than half its preform levels.<sup>7</sup> After an initial period of upheaval, however, the economy slowly began to recover from an acute decline between 1991 and 1996, until in 1998, another economic crisis shocked the country as the currency was devalued overnight.<sup>8</sup> It was an uncertain time for everyone, and not least for artists.

It took several decades for opera houses to recover from this economic and political instability, and for the semblance of a new style, Russianist Realism, to form. The major repertoire theatres, such as the Bolshoi and Mariinsky Theatres did their best to simply keep their doors open; they largely reverted to standard repertory and avoided the risk of world premieres.<sup>9</sup> But there the similarity ends, as the two theatres weathered the 1990s very differently. The Bolshoi stagnated: it was marked by infighting and neglect among the leadership, and lack of discipline in artistic standards.<sup>10</sup> As the head of the ballet company, Iurii

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<sup>4</sup> Clifford S. Poirot, 'Financial Integration Under Conditions of Chaotic Hysteresis: The Russian Financial Crisis of 1998', *Journal of Post Keynesian Economics* 23, no. 3 (2001): 485-507. 497.

<sup>5</sup> William Quillen, 'Winning and Losing in Russian New Music Today', *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 67, no. 2 (2014): 487-542. 489.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, 492.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, 495.

<sup>8</sup> Edwin Bacon, *Securitising Russia: The Domestic Politics of Putin* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2006), 158.

<sup>9</sup> Repertoire archives from the websites of the Bolshoi Theatre and the Mariinsky Theatre.

<sup>10</sup> *Moscow News*, 'The Tragic Parable of the Bolshoi', 14, 14.04.1995.

Grigorovich, and the chief conductor, Aleksandr Lazarev, both began spending more time abroad (where they started commanding sizeable fees), they left the Bolshoi in the hands of ‘second-rate conductors’ and administrators, and did little to maintain eclectic or creative repertoire in the theatre.<sup>11</sup> In his fifteen-year tenure as ballet director, Grigorovich oversaw only one original work, and as an example of his lack of industry, in the 1994-95 season, planned no new works and only one revival, Ludwig Minkus’ *Don Quixote*.<sup>12</sup> Similarly, Lazarev initiated only seven new opera productions during his tenure, all of which were Russian classics, and most of which quickly dropped out of the repertoire.<sup>13</sup> In fact, the Bolshoi Theatre would not produce a single world premiere of an opera for twenty-six years, between 1979 and 2005. The Mariinsky, on the other hand, led by Gergiev, leveraged the new-found market freedom to attract foreign sponsors, preserve local talent, and to revive forgotten and neglected repertoire – all steps that the Bolshoi overlooked. The Mariinsky Theatre Trust was founded in 1993 in the UK, an organisation that, according to its website, ‘combines practical assistance for the Mariinsky Theatre’s work in Russia with active promotion of its...programming in the UK.’<sup>14</sup> Similar foundations were created in France and in the United States just a few years later, and as a result, by the mid-1990s, the Mariinsky could boast a global support network unequalled by any other Russian theatre.<sup>15</sup> In order to keep Russian talents from emigrating, Gergiev arranged the purchase of a large block of flats across the street from the theatre immediately after privatisation; flats and rooms were then allocated to artists at virtually no cost in order to help them afford staying in Russia on theatre salaries, and to make their lives as convenient as possible.<sup>16</sup> Gergiev also increased the repertoire to include

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<sup>11</sup> *Moscow News*, ‘Mutiny at the Bolshoi’, 29, 22.04.1994.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>14</sup> Mariinsky Theatre Trust, <http://www.mariinskytrust.org.uk/about/>, Accessed 15.05.2020.

<sup>15</sup> See <https://projects.propublica.org/nonprofits/organizations/113530261>.

<http://www.rdouglasheldon.com/artist.php?view=bi&bid=1668>.

<sup>16</sup> *The Financial Times*, ‘Russia’s battling brands of culture’, 12.06.1999.

Richard Wagner operas – which had been an early twentieth-century staple of the theatre – and other European classics which the Bolshoi continued to ignore.<sup>17</sup> It was during this decade that the Mariinsky laid the groundwork for national and global prominence with which the Bolshoi would not be able to compete.

The year 2000 marked the beginning of a change. Putin took the office of President, and the country began stabilising for the first time – crime rates plummeted, and the economy displayed hopeful signs of further recovery.<sup>18</sup> At the same time, however, military conflict spiked with Chechnya in 1999, and the Second Chechen Campaign was launched by late 2000 – a full military initiative which Putin framed mostly as an anti-terrorist campaign.<sup>19</sup> Putin leveraged his situation as a war-time president to legitimise increased power, and put a series of measures in place to drive the entire system toward authoritarian consolidation.<sup>20</sup> The attention of the government was not focused on art, however;<sup>21</sup> Putin was far more occupied with the task of increasing economic stability, his fight against terrorism, and framing this fight on the world stage (though all of this would change in his third term).<sup>22</sup> In the years from 2000 to 2010, therefore, a window appeared with just enough prosperity and freedom for opera houses and composers to begin to experiment again. Daring new productions of old favourites were tried before world premieres: in 2002, the newly appointed director of the Bolshoi Theatre, Aleksandr Vedernikov invited renowned American director Francesca Zambello to stage a novel version of Giacomo Puccini's *Turandot*.<sup>23</sup> In 2004, the Bolshoi produced a new version of Shostakovich's ballet *Svetlyi ruchej* (*The Limpid Stream*), and in 2005, braved its first world

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<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

<sup>18</sup> Gregory Sporton, 'Power as Nostalgia: The Bolshoi Ballet in the New Russia', *New Theatre Quarterly* 22, no. 88 (2006): 379-86. 379.

<sup>19</sup> Bacon, *Securitising Russia*: 46-69. 49.

<sup>20</sup> Graeme Gill, 'The Basis of Putin's Power', *Russian Politics* 1, no. 1 (2016): 46-69. 48.

<sup>21</sup> See Iva Glisic and Biljana Puric, 'Art as a Living Archive: Post-1989 Performance Art in Serbia and Russia', *Third Text* 33, no. 2 (2019): 213-34.

<sup>22</sup> Bacon, *Securitising Russia*, 50.

<sup>23</sup> *Financial Times*, 'Bolshoi dares to be different', 19.09.2002.

premiere of the twenty-first century: *Deti Rosentalia (The Children of Rosenthal)* by Leonid Desiatnikov.

*The Children of Rosenthal* is an anomaly in the history of modern Russian opera. Unfortunately, however, it was a creative flare which did not ignite similar initiatives. It represents a singular moment of unpunished experimentation: while it provoked the first operatic scandal since the Soviet period, however, the scandal did not shut the production down. This was, in fact, the exact, calculated gamble that the producers had made. In 2001, committee members of the planning section of the Bolshoi Theatre met and decided they needed to breathe new life into the theatre.<sup>24</sup> They considered several ‘offensive’ Russian authors, including Viktor Pelevin and Vladimir Sorokin, in order to attract more interest in their project. The head of this section, Petr Pospelov, a vocal admirer of experimental art, championed the idea of a radical opera with a libretto by Sorokin and a score by a daring composer – Desiatnikov. On cue, the opera first garnered criticism by association with Sorokin, who had been skewered in the national media two years before for his novel *Goluboe salo (Blue Lard)*, a political satire about Soviet leaders charged with homosexual undertones.<sup>25</sup> The announcement of the Bolshoi’s contract with Sorokin alone, in 2002, was enough to spark protests.<sup>26</sup> Pro-Kremlin youth protesters, joined by religious protesters, gathered in front of the Bolshoi during the rehearsal process bearing banners with slogans such as, ‘Banish pornographer and excrement-eater from the Bolshoi Theatre’.<sup>27</sup> On 4 March 2005, just over two weeks before the premiere, a government inquiry was launched: 293 members of Russia’s State Duma attended a dress rehearsal of *The Children of Rosenthal* to judge the appropriateness of the opera.<sup>28</sup> The initiative, led by Duma member Sergei Neverov, was intended to confirm whether or not the

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<sup>24</sup> Lenta.ru, 11.03.2005, <https://lenta.ru/articles/2005/03/11/bolshoi/>. Accessed 20.03.2020.

<sup>25</sup> ‘Vladimir Sorokin’s “Trick Lard”, *Index on Censorship* 32, no. 2 (April 2003): 202.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid.

<sup>27</sup> *Financial Times*, ‘Attacks on new Bolshoi opera...’, 05.04.2005.

<sup>28</sup> Lenta.ru, 11.03.2005, <https://lenta.ru/articles/2005/03/11/bolshoi/>. Accessed 20.03.2020.

opera was pornographic; upon discovering there was nothing whatsoever of that nature in the opera, however, they were still doubtful about the political implications of the overall message.<sup>29</sup> Other members were simply uneasy about it, but could not pinpoint why, commenting that this was a ‘triumph of devilry on the opera stage’.<sup>30</sup> Even so, the premiere went ahead, and the calculation of the Bolshoi that they would not be shut down was proven correct.

What was so objectionable about this opera? First and foremost, it was an original, and satirical, interpretation of the Soviet past, viewed through black humour rather than rose-tinted lenses. In a moment when Putin was trying to rehabilitate the Soviet past as a glorious heritage, this take on recent history was enough to raise eyebrows.<sup>31</sup> The opera centres around the character of Alex Rosenthal, a German scientist who flees Nazi Germany to make clones for Stalin. Though he is supposed to make efficient worker clones (Stakhanovites), and gains favour from the dictator this way, he ends up also cloning famous composers for his own gratification: Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, Piotr Tchaikovsky, Modest Musorgsky, Giuseppe Verdi, and Wagner. Rosenthal dies in the early Soviet days, however, leaving his cloned composers homeless and fending for themselves on the streets of Moscow. The resulting circumstances afford the opportunity for wry humour about the nature of Russia, but also for a level of musical eclecticism unprecedented in Russian opera, as the composer plays dexterously with the styles of all five composers (albeit less with Mozart) and weaves them together with his own.

This opera was one of two that marked the false hope of a new daring in Russian opera. It was commissioned as part of a programme called ‘Composer Exchange’, wherein a St Petersburg composer was hired to write an opera for the Bolshoi, and a Moscow composer was

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<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

<sup>30</sup> *Financial Times*, ‘Murky doings at the Bolshoi’, 01.04.2005.

<sup>31</sup> Birgit Beumers, *Russia's New Fin de Siècle* (Bristol: Intellect, 2002), 3.

hired to write an opera for the Mariinsky.<sup>32</sup> While the Bolshoi portion came to fruition in Desiatnikov's opera, however, the Mariinsky portion never fully flowered. Vladimir Martynov, who had by this point gained a reputation as Moscow's most radical composer, wrote an opera based on Dante Alighieri's *Vita Nova* (called by the same name in Russian, *Novaia zhizn'*), but it was never given a full production.<sup>33</sup> After one concert performance by Gergiev's Academy of Young Singers as part of his Moscow Easter Festival in 2003, the opera disappeared; Gergiev did not fulfil the contract of staging the opera at the Mariinsky, and no other operas have yet appeared of a similarly bold and unconventional bent. In addition, in almost symbolic timing, just four months after the premiere of *The Children of Rosenthal*, the Bolshoi Theatre closed its main stage for renovation; it would not open again for another six years, in 2011, and when it did, it would open to a new cultural policy, and a new, more conservative, trajectory for opera in Russia.

### **Russian state cultural policy: new directions**

The beginning of Putin's third term in 2012 marked a tidal shift. His agenda swung toward authoritarian conservatism, which he manifested by cracking down on protest movements and actively promoting shows of patriotism.<sup>34</sup> Critically, however, he also showed an interest in intervening in the cultural sphere which he had mostly left alone in his first two terms. He appointed the ultra-conservative Vladimir Medinskii, a self-proclaimed 'historian' with no artistic credentials to his name, as the Minister of Culture. Medinskii holds three degrees, two in political science and his most recent in history, and his supposedly historical books include a series titled *Mify o Rossii (Myths About Russia)*, wherein he attempts to set

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<sup>32</sup> *Kommersant*, 08.05.2003, <https://www.kommersant.ru/doc/380843>. Accessed 18.03.2020.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>34</sup> Lena Jonson, 'Russia: Culture, Cultural Policy, and the Swinging Pendulum of Politics' in *Cultural and Political Imaginaries in Putin's Russia*, eds. Niklas Bernsand and Barbara Törnquist Plewa (Leiden: Brill, 2019): 13-36. 13.

right all global misconceptions about Russia. In his book about the Second World War, for example, he makes such claims as it was Russia alone – not France, the UK, and the USA – who defeated the Nazis, and that in fact, the doctrine of UK colonialism was pretty much like Nazism, and that the USA was only out to make money out of the war, so they had nothing to do with defeating Hitler.<sup>35</sup> This series was part of his effort as a member of the presidential committee he served on from 2010 to 2012 of the most extraordinary title, ‘*Kommissiia po protivodeistviu popytkam fal’sifikatsii istorii v ushcherb interesam Rossii*’ (‘Commission to Counteract Attempts to Falsify History Against the Interests of Russia’). Medinskii entered his post as Minister of Culture, therefore, with a specific agenda, and he immediately began by reorganising cultural institutions and replacing their artistic directors with his own – often inexperienced – friends as loyal appointees.<sup>36</sup> A wave of artistic scandals swept Moscow shortly after these appointments in 2012. At the opening of the Moscow Contemporary Art Biennial, Medinskii rattled the capital’s artistic communities by making known his opinion of the art represented at this event: ‘Why doesn’t anyone shout “the king is naked!”? Why do we, under the label of contemporary art, have to see something abstract-cubic, clumsy, in the form of a pile of bricks... not to mention that this is incomprehensible to the absolute majority of the inhabitants of Russia.’<sup>37</sup> These strikingly Soviet-sounding categories of intelligibility and classicism must ring with an uncanny *déjà vu* for those who remember the well-documented ‘Manege Affair’, when Nikita Khrushchev publicly excoriated a contemporary art exhibition at Moscow’s Central Exhibition Hall in 1962, exclaiming, ‘gentlemen, we are waging war on you... My opinion is the same as that of the people. I don't understand, and they won't

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<sup>35</sup> See Vladimir Medinskii, *Voina* (Moscow: OLMA Media Group, 2011).

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid*, 16.

<sup>37</sup> Jonson, ‘Russia: Culture’, 18.

understand.’<sup>38</sup> Medinskii revived this rhetoric, and yet, he was not acting independently: he was taking his cues from the Kremlin.

An analysis of publicly available meeting transcripts from the Kremlin over the past decade reveals that from the beginning of his third presidential term in 2012 onward, Putin began intensifying the government’s involvement in what he calls ‘the cultural sphere’.<sup>39</sup> From 2007 to 2012, when Putin was serving temporarily as Prime Minister and Dmitri Medvedev as President, the annual meetings of the *Sovet po kul’ture i isskustvu* (The Council of Culture and the Arts), which were held ‘*pri presidente*’ (under the aegis of the president) were suspended; evidently Medvedev decided that the president was not necessary in determining the inner workings of *Swan Lake*. But Putin immediately reinstated these meetings when he returned to office. In the first of these revived meetings, which included leaders in cinema, theatre, ballet, opera, and instrumental music, he set the tone for the heightened levels of involvement he expected from his office in culture.<sup>40</sup> Culture, he explained, is what shapes who we are and what we become, and one of the principle issues, therefore, ‘is how to make our cultural policy the basis of a real, thriving, societal-governmental partnership.’<sup>41</sup> He warned that Russia was at risk of losing its ‘own cultural face, our national cultural code, and our moral core.’<sup>42</sup>

Every subsequent year between 2012 and 2018, Putin’s language about the government’s role in shaping culture became both more sweeping in its scope and more specific in its requirements. In 2013, he emphasised that it was time to rethink the approach to the cultural sphere yet again. He commented, ‘we need specific principles and orientations to

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<sup>38</sup> Susan Emily Reid, 'In the Name of the People: The Manege Affair Revisited', *Kritika* 6, no. 4 (2005): 673-716. 673.

<sup>39</sup> ‘Zasedanie soveta po kul’ture i iskustvu 2 oktiabria 2013 goda’, 2.10.2013, Moscow, the Kremlin. <http://kremlin.ru/events/councils/by-council/7/19353>. Accessed 20.03.2020.

<sup>40</sup> For more details on how shifting cultural policy affected theatre in particular, see Alexander Trustrum Thomas, ‘From Stalinist Socialist Realism to Putinist Capitalist Realism: Tracing cultural ideology in contemporary Russia’ in *New Drama in Russian: Performance, Politics and Protest in Russia, Ukraine and Belarus*, ed. J.A.E. Curtis (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2020): 41-53.

<sup>41</sup> ‘Zasedanie soveta po kul’ture i iskustvu 25 sentiabria 2012 goda’, 25.09.2012, Moscow, the Kremlin. <http://kremlin.ru/events/councils/by-council/7/16530>. Accessed 21.03.2020.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*

designate a defined role for culture, and to make sure that it is not a peripheral factor in the development of our country.’<sup>43</sup> Furthermore, he asserted that, ‘the formation of culture must happen in close contact with society and the political powers...and above all, the role of our cultural policy must be understandable to our citizens and to our youth’.<sup>44</sup> These sentiments escalated in 2014, when Putin’s hints transformed into law. At the meeting that year, Putin asserted that ‘culture can only reach its heights under the following two conditions: faithfulness to historical traditions, and without doubt, freedom in art, thought, and spiritual development.’<sup>45</sup> Following up on this remark, Medinskii introduced a document which, he claimed, would guide culture along these tracks, and serve as the basis ‘for our ideology in the cultural sphere.’<sup>46</sup> Putin signed the document, called *Osnovy gosudarstvennoi kul’turnoi politiki* (the Foundations of State Cultural Policy) the same day.

The document could almost be a carbon copy of a Soviet decree on artistic guidelines. The stated aims were to recognise the importance of culture in preserving the stability of the nation, and declaring the intention – and right – of the state, therefore, to guide the formation of culture. The preamble begins by affirming the uniqueness of Russia and its place in the world, especially as a bridge between East and West.<sup>47</sup> It goes on to define the terms, including ‘cultural policy’ itself as, ‘the set of formal and informal institutions, phenomena, and factors which influence the preservation, production, broadcast, and spreading of spiritual values (ethical, aesthetic, intellectual, civic).’<sup>48</sup> This definition leaves almost nothing outside of its scope: private or public, informal or formal, the state would now be authorised to apply its

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<sup>43</sup> ‘Zasedanie soveta po kul’ture i iskustvu 2 oktiabria 2013 goda’, 2.10.2013, Moscow, the Kremlin. <http://kremlin.ru/events/councils/by-council/7/19353>. Accessed 20.03.2020.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid.

<sup>45</sup> ‘Sovmestnoe zasedanie Gossoveta i Soveta po kul’ture i iskustvu 24 dekabria 2014 goda’, 24.12.2014, Moscow, the Kremlin. <http://kremlin.ru/events/councils/by-council/7/47324>. Accessed 27.03.2020.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid.

<sup>47</sup> ‘Osnovy gosudarstvennyi kul’turnoi politiki’ <http://static.kremlin.ru/media/events/files/41d526a877638a8730eb.pdf>, 1. Accessed 22.03.2020. See too Walter Laqueur, *Black Hundred: The Rise of the Extreme Right in Russia* (New York: HarperPerennial, 1994).

<sup>48</sup> ‘Osnovy gosudarstvennyi kul’turnoi politiki’, 4.

stipulations about appropriate forms of culture. Lest the government be accused of overreach, however, the authors included a clause which displays both irony and surprising self-awareness; they list one of the main principles of the policy as ‘freedom of art and non-interference by the government in artistic affairs’.<sup>49</sup> Though a contradiction to the fact that the policy exists at all, this line would give authorities material to quote in case of resistance or criticism. Finally, it does differ from similar Soviet documents in one significant respect: it gives a privileged place to the Russian Orthodox Church in having defined ‘the system of Russian values’, and acknowledges this place for the future.<sup>50</sup>

Government censorship of opera increased immediately; that is to say, it began again, after a hiatus of about twenty years. In 2015, the Ministry of Culture banned a production of Wagner’s *Tannhäuser* from The Novosibirsk State Opera and Ballet Theatre for ‘offending the feelings of believers’.<sup>51</sup> The young Russian director responsible, Timofei Kuliabin, had updated Wagner’s story: in his version, Heinrich Tannhäuser was a film director working on a movie that would display the years of Jesus’ life not covered by the New Testament. In the opera, the poster for this movie featured a naked woman with a crucifix between her legs, the element that provoked most of the outrage.<sup>52</sup> Despite the fact that the opera was not endorsing such imagery – rather, it showed the crowds on stage being equally outraged and banishing Tannhäuser from the town for producing such a thing – the image itself was enough to rile activists. The privileged place given to the Orthodox Church as the guardian of morality in the Foundations of State Cultural Policy, as well as the state’s newly reinstated right to uphold the country’s traditions in culture, emboldened religious and state actors to intervene. First, the

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<sup>49</sup> Ibid, 7.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid, 2. See also Hillen, *Nationalism*, 7-8.

<sup>51</sup> *The Guardian*, ‘Opera director charged by Russian authorities with offending Christians’, 25.02.2015, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/feb/25/opera-director-charged-by-russian-authorities-with-offending-christians>. Accessed 18.03.2020.

<sup>52</sup> *Moscow Times*, ‘Wagner opera scandal reflects deep divide.’ 03.25.2015. <https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2015/03/25/wagner-opera-scandal-reflects-deep-divide-in-russian-society-a45161>. Accessed 18.03.2020.

Metropolitan of Novosibirsk brought Kuliabin to court under ‘administrative charges’.<sup>53</sup> A spokesperson for the Orthodox Church, Vsevolod Chaplin, explained that though ‘the church never forbids any kind of cultural display, it insists on the right to give a moral evaluation to anything happening in society or culture.’<sup>54</sup> He also commented on the need to control the impulses of the liberal intelligentsia, which, according to him, foolishly think that ‘innovation is always good, and traditions are bad’.<sup>55</sup> In spite of these efforts, the prosecutor found nothing illegal and dismissed the charges, but not before fining Kuliabin 100,000 roubles (approximately £1000) and banning future performances of this production.<sup>56</sup>

When these charges were dismissed, Iaroslav Nilov, the head of the State Duma’s committee on Public Associations and Religious Organisations, took up the case, and called for criminal charges against the director for offending the feelings of believers.<sup>57</sup> A criminal case based on these charges was possible because of a new law added in 2013, in the wake of the Pussy Riot performances at Christ the Saviour Cathedral, whereby ‘carrying out public acts that offend believers’ would warrant a three-year jail sentence.<sup>58</sup> Nilov commented, ‘Praise God that we have such a law. We punish people not for offending, but for performing acts which were clearly created for the purpose of offending.’<sup>59</sup> He also stated that it is critical to punish those with the most responsibility for such acts as examples in order to discourage others from imitating them.<sup>60</sup> Though Kuliabin was not arrested in the end, in addition to facing criminal charges and public scrutiny, the Ministry of Culture heeded Nilov, and Medinskii

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<sup>53</sup> *Vesti*, ‘V Novosibirskom sude...’, 5.03.2015, <https://www.vesti.ru/doc.html?id=2401481>. Accessed 31.03.2020. Ibid.

<sup>54</sup> *Vesti*, ‘Chaplin: Raspiatie v “Tangeizere”’, 03.04.2015, <https://www.vesti.ru/doc.html?id=2475854>. Accessed 31.02.2020.

<sup>55</sup> *The Moscow Times*, ‘Wagner opera scandal...’

<sup>56</sup> *Vesti*, ‘V Novosibirskom sude...’.

<sup>57</sup> *Moscow Times*, ‘Wagner opera...’.

<sup>58</sup> *The Guardian*, ‘Opera director charged...’

<sup>59</sup> Ibid.

<sup>60</sup> *Lenta*, ‘V Gosdume prizvali posadit’...’, 05.03.2015. <https://lenta.ru/news/2015/03/05/prison/>. Accessed 31.03.2020.

promptly fired the director of the Novosibirsk theatre, Boris Mezdrich.<sup>61</sup> Medinskii replaced him with a personal friend, businessman and theatre-lover Vladimir Kekhman.<sup>62</sup>

The *Tannhäuser* affair was not even the crest of the wave of removals and reorganisations that swept Russia over the next few years. In January 2015, Orthodox activists in Samara published an open letter demanding the resignation of the director of the Samara Academic Drama Theatre, Valerii Grishko, because he had played the role of the bishop in the film *Leviathan*, which they considered slanderous of the Church.<sup>63</sup> In February in Izhevsk, a priest of the St Michael Cathedral accused a production of Aleksandr Pushkin's *Metel'* (*The Blizzard*) of insulting believers.<sup>64</sup> Russia's most famous theatre arts award festival, *Zolotaia maska* (The Golden Mask), was also impacted by governmental, if not religious, pressures. In 2014, an open letter in the right wing publication *Stoletie* (*Century*) excoriated the festival for upholding Western aesthetic standards that contradict Russian morality and tradition.<sup>65</sup> The letter mentions the potential of a forthcoming declaration that would give the government the authority to limit such nonsense; the author meant, of course, the Foundations of State Cultural Policy, which the president signed a few months later.<sup>66</sup> In response, the managers of the Golden Mask appointed a new board of directors, which would no longer be comprised solely of artists. Rather, it would be composed half of artistic experts, and half of representatives from the Ministry of Culture.<sup>67</sup> Journalist Alena Solntseva observed that until this moment, there had been an agreed upon principle governing the relationship between art and the state in modern Russia: from the perspective of the government, 'we support it, and we won't

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<sup>61</sup> *Classical Music News*, 'Timofei Kuliabin: ia by s udovol'stviem postavil "Tannhauser" zanovo'. 03.06.2018. <https://www.classicalmusicnews.ru/interview/timofey-kulyabin-2018/>

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>63</sup> *Theatre Information Gateway*, 'The Tannhauser Syndrome'. 01.12.2019. [http://www.rtlb.ru/en\\_infocus\\_latest/](http://www.rtlb.ru/en_infocus_latest/). Accessed 27.03.2020.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>65</sup> *Stoletie*, 'Maidanutyi teatr', 14.09.2014. [http://www.stoletie.ru/kultura/majdanutyj\\_tetr\\_389.htm](http://www.stoletie.ru/kultura/majdanutyj_tetr_389.htm) Accessed 20.03.2020

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>67</sup> *Souz teatral'nykh deatelei Rossiskoi federatsii*, 'Utverzhdenny sostavy ekspertnykh sovetov "Zolotoi maski"', 13.10.2015. <http://stdrf.ru/news/689/>. Accessed 27.03.2020.

meddle.’<sup>68</sup> She argued that from the moment Medinskii was named Minister of Culture in 2012 (and incidentally, when Putin returned, though she does not bring this point up), the cultural involvement of the state became aggressive. She pointed out that this reorganisation of the Golden Mask is just one example of these new tendencies, and that the Ministry of Culture carried out an active plan: ‘to stop financing so-called “experimenters” and re-programme the activities of all subordinate cultural institutions in the direction of national and traditional values.’<sup>69</sup> Solntseva pushed even further, however. She insisted that just as experiments were being discouraged, there was also a particular type of dramaturgy and aesthetic that was becoming expected: ‘since there is no contemporary language to fill the artistic discourse, one has to use the old clichés of Socialist Realism, with its demands of optimism, intelligibility, and of idealising heroes and circumstances.’<sup>70</sup> It is the updating and adaptations of these criteria, I will argue, that have formed the basis of Russianist Realism.

Both of Solntseva’s predictions – that from then on, a certain style would be expected, and that the government would intervene – proved true. In 2017, film and theatre director Kiril Serebrennikov was put under house arrest for upsetting the government, the first time a cultural leader of that status had been arrested by the authorities since the arrest of Vsevolod Meyerhold during Stalin’s terror.<sup>71</sup> At the time the director of the Gogol Centre in Moscow, a niche experimental theatre, he had developed a reputation for modernising Russian classic plays and infusing them with controversial elements, such as nudity and profanity, and also for directing films featuring taboo themes, such as homosexuality and religious hypocrisy.<sup>72</sup> A year before his arrest he started commenting publicly about repression of artistic ideas. ‘Everyone is scared

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<sup>68</sup> *Teatrall*, ‘Chto proiskhodit s “Zolotoi maskoi”’, 22.10.2015, <https://www.teatrall.ru/post/2669-chto-proishodit-s-zolotoj-maskoj/>. Accessed 27.03.2020.

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>71</sup> J.A.E. Curtis, ‘Introduction: Recent developments in Russian, Ukrainian, and Belorussian drama’, in *New Drama in Russian*: 1-22. 8.

<sup>72</sup> For a discussion of Serebrennikov’s films, including his attempted biopic about Tchaikovsky’s life, see Philip R. Bullock, ‘“That’s Not the Only Reason We Love Him”: Tchaikovskii Reception in Post-Soviet Russia’, *Slavic Review* 77, no 1 (2018): 53-76.

of offending the officials, who you have to go to and beg for money from’, he admitted to the press in 2016.<sup>73</sup> In response, Kremlin spokesperson Dmitri Peskov affirmed that if the money comes from the state, then the state should have a right to make recommendations about the content for which it is used.<sup>74</sup> Serebrennikov scoffed at this statement, and responded that at least no one tries to influence him anymore, because they know it is pointless; all they can do, he said, is cut the subsidies to his theatre, which had already been slashed to a minimum.<sup>75</sup>

Until the house arrest happened, Serebrennikov seemed to be operating under the assumption, based on his comments to the press, that the worst that might happen was a reduction in state funding. But in August 2017, just as his ballet *Nureyev* was supposed to premiere at the Bolshoi Theatre, Serebrennikov was put under house arrest, and the performances were cancelled.<sup>76</sup> *Nureyev* traced the life of the dancer Rudolf Nureyev in all of its controversial elements – his defection to the West, his romantic relationships with men, and his AIDS-related death. The official allegations against Serebrennikov, however, were not about *Nureyev*; they were about money. The prosecutors claimed the director had embezzled \$1.1 million of funds that were meant to be used for productions. But there was no evidence presented in court that any funds were embezzled. On the contrary, the published costs for the productions lined up exactly with the amount of funds allegedly stolen.<sup>77</sup> For example, the prosecutors stated early on that one of the budget items, a production of William Shakespeare’s *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*, had never taken place, and therefore could not have accounted

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<sup>73</sup> *The Guardian*, ‘Moscow theatre director claims state censorship...’, 28.10.2016. <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/oct/28/moscow-theatre-director-row-claims-state-censorship-konstantin-raikin>. Accessed 27.03.2020.

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>76</sup> The performances were eventually allowed to continue, but six months later, and since Serebrennikov could not communicate with the dancers during the rehearsal process, it was essentially under different direction.

<sup>77</sup> *The Guardian*, ‘Leading arts figures urge Russia...’, 29.08.2017. <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/aug/29/leading-arts-figures-urge-russia-to-drop-flimsy-charges-against-director> Accessed 26.03.2020.

for the funds.<sup>78</sup> The play, however, had not only taken place, but had already won multiple awards with full audiences, and it was incontrovertible that it had incurred production expenses.<sup>79</sup> The prosecutors ignored this fact. Clearly, Serebrennikov had upset someone powerful, and the prosecutors were hunting for a crime that merited arrest. What was Serebrennikov's offense? It is likely that the Ministry of Culture finally agreed with the opinion of influential film director Nikita Mikhalkov, that Serebrennikov's productions were too charged with anti-Russian themes (such as homosexuality) to be allowed to continue.<sup>80</sup> After three years of delayed trial, two of the three while under house arrest, Serebrennikov was finally convicted of the alleged embezzlement on 26 June 2020, and sentenced to three years' probation, a fine of 800,000 roubles (about £8,000), and damages of 129 million roubles (about £1.3 million) that he owed the government.<sup>81</sup> Though *Nureyev* was eventually premiered – with Serebrennikov still under house arrest – these trials bear eerie similarities to the Soviet show trials.<sup>82</sup> They indicate a return to Soviet-style artistic censorship.

By 2017, Putin was ready to further intensify his control of the cultural process. He stated that it was exactly three years ago that they had worked on the Foundations of State Cultural Policy, but that now it was time to put a law into effect.<sup>83</sup> Culture, he insisted, is

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<sup>78</sup> *The Guardian*, 'They will destroy you...', 17.01.2020.

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/jan/17/putin-kirill-serebrennikov-arts-clampdown-russia-bolshoi> Accessed 27.03.2020.

<sup>79</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>80</sup> *The Guardian*, 'Nureyev premieres in Moscow with director under house arrest' 10.12.2017

<https://www.theguardian.com/stage/2017/dec/10/nureyev-premiere-moscow-bolshoi-kirill-serebrennikov-house-arrest> Accessed 26.03.2020.

<sup>81</sup> *RIA Novosti*, 'Delo "Sed'moi studii": v chem obviniaut rezhissera Kirilla Serebrennikova', 26.06.2020. <https://ria.ru/20200626/1573483918.html>. Accessed 12.10.2020.

*The Hollywood Reporter*, 30 June 2020 'Serebrennikov Breaks Silence After Fraud Conviction: "I Am Not a Thief"'. 30.06.2020. <https://www.hollywoodreporter.com/news/kirill-serebrennikov-fraud-conviction-i-am-not-a-thief-1301024>. 12.10.2020

*Meduza*, 'Defendants appeal sentences in controversial "Seventh Studio" case'. 6.7.2020.

<https://meduza.io/en/news/2020/07/06/defense-appeals-russian-director-s-sentence-in-controversial-embezzlement-case>. Accessed 12.10.2020.

<sup>82</sup> Bolshoi Theatre, 'Nureyev', <https://www.bolshoi.ru/en/performances/1025/roles/#20191103190000>. Accessed 13.05.2020.

<sup>83</sup> 'Zasedanie soveta po kul'ture i iskustvu 21 dekabria 2017 goda', 21.12.2017, Moscow, the Kremlin, <http://kremlin.ru/events/councils/by-council/7/56456>. Accessed 20.03.2020.

‘worldview, and above all, a universal instrument to preserve and to pass on traditional moral, spiritual, and aesthetic values and the basis of harmonious, free society...’.<sup>84</sup> Along those lines, he expressed his intention to pass a law that would ‘clearly reflect the features and specifics of the sphere of culture and its comprehensive nature and significance as a public good and as a mission.’<sup>85</sup> While at the time of writing, such a law has not yet come into effect, it is clear that cultural control is expanding in Russia, and has now reached a level unparalleled since Stalin’s time – and it is probably not yet at its peak.

### **Opera houses as symbols of power**

If documents and policy expose the political milieu in which opera was developing from 2000 to 2018, brick and mortar reveal the rising status of opera for Russia’s modern imperial image. The use of opera houses as symbols of power is nothing new; in fact, it may seem a tired, and familiar pattern from the nineteenth century and Soviet period. What is surprising, however, is that such an antiquated symbol still bears significance for a twenty-first century global (and nuclear) superpower. And yet, evidence suggests that it does. In Russia in the last decade, the building and renovation of opera houses has become a substantial – and ostentatious – part of the national project of urban redevelopment and rebranding for the country as a whole: between 2005 and 2018, the Bolshoi Theatre built a new stage and renovated its historical stage; the Helikon Opera (founded 1990) ‘renovated’ its hall (which was essentially the construction of a new one); the Mariinsky Theatre built its second theatre and its concert hall; the federal government sponsored the construction of a new opera house in Vladivostok, which opened in 2012; and the Perm Opera and Ballet Theatre had been planning to renovate for this entire period, but to this date, infighting has kept the project from

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<sup>84</sup> Ibid.

<sup>85</sup> Ibid.

coming to fruition.<sup>86</sup> And these are only opera houses; I will not list the nearly two-dozen new concert halls that have sprung up across Russia in the last twenty years, but their scale and costs are staggering.

In his first two terms, Putin raised the status of opera as a genre while mostly ignoring its content. In 2003, for the tricentennial of St Petersburg, the president announced three projects for the future development of the city: a new sports stadium, a commercial development project on the island of *Novaia Gollandia* (New Holland), and a new stage of the Mariinsky Theatre, to be completed by 2009 for a budget of \$100 million (the actual costs would be over six times that much).<sup>87</sup> The fact that he singled out an opera house as the flagship project for the city, out of all of the possible options for redevelopment, demonstrates that in Putin's Russia, opera still symbolises the kind of imperial grandeur and high culture for which he intends the country to be known. Though at first there seems to be a great deal of similarity between this post-Soviet promotion of opera and opera houses and the Soviet promotion as outlined in Chapters 1 and 2, I believe there has been a distinct shift in emphasis: whereas opera during the Soviet period was primarily aimed at ideological education of the populace and at attracting large working class audiences, everything about the construction of the Mariinsky suggests that this new phase in opera in Russia looks outward, aiming to display Russian cultural prowess more to the rest of the world than to locals.

The construction saga of the Mariinsky-2 reveals just how much the project was planned for international – rather than local – impact. The announcement of the location of the new theatre, which would be right across from the old Mariinsky in the historic centre of St Petersburg, was met with public outrage and petitions in person and across the internet on platforms such as change.org and livejournal.com. Several offences provoked the outrage: first,

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<sup>86</sup> I examine each of these more thoroughly below.

<sup>87</sup> Nathaniel S. Trumbull, 'Culture-led Development and Conflict Over Urban Space: Reimag(in)ing St Petersburg, Russia', *Human Geography* 96, no. 1 (2014): 1-22. 1.

there was the fact that a massive new building project would cause an incursion into the protected historical zone of the *Kolomna* district, which, according to law, was not allowed to be developed.<sup>88</sup> Then there was the fact that several publicly usable spaces would need to be demolished, including *Dvortets kul'tury pervoi piatiletki* (The Palace of Culture of the First Five-Year Plan), which featured rehearsal space for community dance and theatre groups, a movie theatre, café, and bowling alley; School No. 243, a public park, and part of an eighteenth century Lithuanian market complex.<sup>89</sup> All of these institutions would have lower entry costs and be more publicly accessible than would the new Mariinsky Theatre. Finally, there was a sense of indignation due to powerlessness – though there had been a law protecting the historic region, in 2004, the law was ‘adjusted’, and the *Kolomna* district, famous for its quaint architecture and calm, atmospheric neighbourhoods, was quietly and unceremoniously removed from the list of protected zones.<sup>90</sup>

None of this is new in the history of opera house construction; the Paris Opera, among many others, was also cavalierly built atop layers of archaeology.<sup>91</sup> For the residents of *Kolomna*, however, precedent was not a strong enough justification. There was little question that the Mariinsky-2 would become an exclusionary space, taking up an entire city block of what was formerly communal space, and that their daily lives would be hampered rather than enhanced by the monolith structure. Even for the residents of the broader city, the placement of the theatre was questionable. If the goal had been to economically benefit and culturally develop the city, surely the theatre ought to have been placed in one of the many districts that thirst for some kind of cultural attention and investment, as Nathaniel Trumbull has observed.<sup>92</sup> To move the new theatre out of the historic centre would also have allayed concerns about

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<sup>88</sup> Ibid, 10.

<sup>89</sup> Ibid, 8.

<sup>90</sup> Ibid, 10.

<sup>91</sup> Klaus van den Berg, ‘The Opera House as Urban Exhibition Space’, in *Operatic Geographies: The Place of Opera and the Opera House*, ed. Suzanne Aspden (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2019): 213-33. 218.

<sup>92</sup> Trumbull, ‘Culture-led Development’, 10.

destroying the unique architectural continuity of St Petersburg. For the sake of developing the city as a global and marketable brand, however, adding a state-of-the-art opera house to the centre was the correct strategic play.

But the scandal neither began, nor ended, with the location. The architecture itself would cause uproar. Though Putin promised, at a meeting dedicated to the building of Mariinsky-2 in 2009, that the top priority would be to ensure that the building would cohere with the ‘unique architectural ensemble of St Petersburg’, by then, it was too late to make such promises.<sup>93</sup> The project was already well underway according to the designs of the Canadian firm Diamond & Schmitt.<sup>94</sup> According to a social media poll taken at the time on the popular Russian blog site livejournal.com, 80.3% of residents agreed that the final result was an ‘ugly monstrosity’ which did not fit in with the local architecture.<sup>95</sup> In addition to the offense of the sleek, seven-story building towering over the entire region, there was the issue of cost. To no one’s surprise, but to public horror, the budget ballooned to almost comical proportions. The Mariinsky-2, initially budgeted at \$100 million, was completed in 2013 for a record cost of \$629 million.<sup>96</sup> In the words of one critic: ‘and so, an “economy-class” building which is somewhat reminiscent of a shopping centre becomes one of the most expensive theatre buildings in the world.’<sup>97</sup>

The Mariinsky-2 was a project aimed at gaining prestige internationally, and also at relegitimising the cultural status of St Petersburg for a new century, but it was only the beginning of the government’s use of opera houses to affirm status. In 2012, a state-of-the-art

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<sup>93</sup> *Pervyi kanal*, ‘Putin provel soveshchanie...’, 29.05.2009. [https://www.1tv.ru/news/2009-05-29/167906-v\\_putin\\_provyol\\_soveshchanie\\_posvyaschenoe\\_stroitelstvu\\_vtoroy\\_stseny\\_mariinskogo\\_tetra](https://www.1tv.ru/news/2009-05-29/167906-v_putin_provyol_soveshchanie_posvyaschenoe_stroitelstvu_vtoroy_stseny_mariinskogo_tetra). Accessed 01.04.2020.

<sup>94</sup> Trumbull, ‘Culture-led development’, 9. The selection of the firm was yet another saga. Diamond & Schmitt was already the second team of architects; the first, Dominique Perrault, who was chosen by the transparent competition in 2003 was replaced in another completely non-transparent bid in 2005.

<sup>95</sup> *Ibid*, 17.

<sup>96</sup> *Ibid*, 11.

<sup>97</sup> *Kulturologia.ru*, ‘Stoimost’ novoi stseny...’, 04.02.2011. <https://kulturologia.ru/news/339/> Accessed 01.04.2020.

opera house was opened in Vladivostok, the home of the Russian navy's Pacific Fleet and only 30 minutes by ferry from Sapporo, Japan. It was one of many projects that the government approved for the development of the Pacific Rim region in advance of the 2012 APEC Summit (Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation). The significance of hosting the summit in Vladivostok demonstrated the Kremlin's intention to turn the city into a window to the East, just as St Petersburg has been known as the window to the West.<sup>98</sup> The government channelled more than \$20 billion into initiatives like the reconstruction of airports, roads, modernising energy systems, constructing new hotels, and, of course, building an opera house.<sup>99</sup> This is an important symbol to suggest that for Russia, it is still the case that a city cannot be world class until it can boast world class culture.

Like the Mariinsky-2, the opera house in Vladivostok cannot have been intended to benefit the city itself so much as to benefit the image of the city from the outside. There were many reasons the addition of an opera house to Vladivostok was impractical. First, the city boasts a population of only 600,000 people; second, until 1991, it held the status of a closed military city with restricted access for non-residents. There were no opera schools or ballet schools, and the residents of the city had no ways of attending such performances elsewhere. In other words, the residents of Vladivostok were unlikely to be prepared for, or particularly interested in, the allegedly magnificent gift the government was bestowing. The theatre had a rocky start, and after several years of struggling to fill the hall, let alone finding enough singers, instrumentalists, and dancers to fill the stage, a solution was proposed: the theatre, known at the time as the Primorskii State Opera and Ballet Theatre, would become a branch – what they would call a *'filial'* – of the Mariinsky Theatre in St Petersburg. At a meeting to discuss this

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<sup>98</sup> *Centre for Strategic and International Studies*, 'Russia Hosting the APEC Summit in Vladivostok: Putin's "Tilt to Asia"', 5.09.2012.

<https://www.csis.org/analysis/russia-hosting-apec-summit-vladivostok-putins-tilt-asia>. Accessed 20.03.2020.

<sup>99</sup> *Echo Moskvy*, 'Ob effektivnosti raskhodov na sammit APEC-2012', 05.09.2012.

[https://echo.msk.ru/blog/naganov\\_v/927067-echo/](https://echo.msk.ru/blog/naganov_v/927067-echo/). Accessed 20.03.2020.

unification at the Kremlin, Putin praised the Mariinsky for increasing its influence across Russia and across the world, but he specifically praised its director, Gergiev, for paying attention to his personal requests to invest in the Far East.<sup>100</sup> In addition to simply joining the theatres, they planned to create a festival that would reach the international prestige of the White Nights Festival in St Petersburg, but hopefully would attract audiences from across Asia as well.<sup>101</sup> This initiative, however, would require far more funding and resources than were available in Vladivostok, and Gergiev confirmed that they would need support from state-run businesses, such as the Russian state railroad company (RZhD) and Aeroflot, the state airline, in order to make this possible.<sup>102</sup>

The theatre in Vladivostok has not provided any world premieres, or particular innovation in opera or ballet, but under the Mariinsky banner, the number of performances grew from 92 in 2015, to 256 in 2016, the first year of its unification.<sup>103</sup> In addition, the quality was enhanced by Mariinsky dancers and singers who were sent on short stints to Vladivostok to join the casts of various productions.<sup>104</sup> Though not spurring innovation, what this entire endeavour demonstrates is the continued commitment of the Russian government to promoting the image of Russian culture through the classical arts. Starting with this stellar example in 2012, Putin has continued to add pressure to raise the level of classical music and opera in all of Russia, and not just the capitals. In particular, he discussed the need to develop certain ‘clusters’, including Kemerovo, Kaliningrad, and Sevastopol’ in addition to Vladivostok.<sup>105</sup>

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<sup>100</sup> ‘Zasedanie politicheskogo soveta Mariinskogo teatra 9 dekabria 2015 goda’, 9.12.2015. Moscow, the Kremlin. <http://kremlin.ru/events/president/news/50895>. Accessed 20.03.2020.

<sup>101</sup> Ibid. I should also mention that it was my job at the time, as Gergiev’s personal assistant in 2015-2016 to be the chief organiser of the first edition of this festival.

<sup>102</sup> As a matter of fact, Aeroflot did not provide enough support in 2016 to bring all of Gergiev’s visions to fruition, and as a result, we were forced to ask the Ministry of Defence to supply military planes to fly Mariinsky artists from St Petersburg to Moscow.

<sup>103</sup> ‘Zasedanie popechitel’skogo soveta Mariinskogo teatra’, 09.12.2015, Accessed 31.03.2020. <http://kremlin.ru/events/president/news/50895>

<sup>104</sup> Observations from personal experience working at the Mariinsky in St Petersburg and Vladivostok from 2015-2016.

<sup>105</sup> ‘Zasedanie Soveta po kul’ture i iskusstvu 15 dekabria 2018 goda’, 15.12.2018. St Petersburg. <http://kremlin.ru/events/councils/by-council/7/59416>. Accessed 28.03.2020.

This interest in the regions has helped funnel funds into renovation and new building projects across the country. In addition to the Mariinsky-2, and the theatre in Vladivostok, Gergiev personally expanded the reach of his artistic influence to the North Caucasus: in 2017, it was announced that the North Ossetian State Opera and Ballet Theatre would become an additional branch of the Mariinsky Theatre, under his leadership, and would receive additional federal funds.<sup>106</sup> The Perm Opera and Ballet Theatre in Siberia had been planning a major renovation and construction of a new theatre since 2012, and while corruption and political games thwarted the project in the beginning at a local level, as of 2019, the Kremlin had become involved and had pledged additional federal funding, as well as oversight.<sup>107</sup>

From 2000 to 2019, therefore, the government, particularly under the leadership of President Putin, and of Minister of Culture Medinskii, had renewed an interest in opera as a means of spreading traditional values and projecting Russian culture abroad and at home. Materially, they followed this ambition by building new opera houses across the country, pouring funds into the Bolshoi, Mariinsky, and other theatres, as well as asserting cultural prowess in Siberia and the East. In addition, a turn toward conservative authoritarianism was coupled with an increased regulation of information in general, as well as the formalisation of new artistic guidelines in 2014 in the Foundations of State Cultural Policy. Practically, these events meant two things for opera composers: first, there were finally abundant resources available for opera once again; and second, since the state had shown so much interest and financial commitment, there would be certain expectations for what would be allowed.

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<sup>106</sup> Gergiev's Charitable Foundation website, <http://gergiev-charity.com/eng/news/279.htm>. Accessed 28.03.2020.

<sup>107</sup> *Meduza*, 'Vladimir Kekhman podkliuchilsia k proektu...', 07.05.2019. <https://meduza.io/feature/2019/05/07/vladimir-kehman-podklyuchilsya-k-proektu-stroitelstva-novoy-stseny-dlya-permskoy-opery>. Accessed 28.03.2020.

## Part II: 'Russianist Realism'

Up until this point, I have analysed the environment surrounding the new style of opera that has emerged, from the political and economic shifts in modern Russia, to the artistic policies and changes in major theatres, to the building projects across the country. Here, I analyse the new style itself – Russianist Realism – by looking at the world premieres of operas at Russian theatres from 2012-2019.<sup>108</sup> Once again, this requires a diversion from Shchedrin in order to provide the full context in which his late operas were written, which entails laying the groundwork for the trend of which they are a part by examining six other operas before reaching his. Like Socialist Realism, the guidelines for Russianist Realism have not been officially defined; rather, through speeches and proclamations of government spokespeople on the one hand, and through censure and censorship of the disapproved methods on the other, the limits and guidelines have become increasingly clear over these years. Between Putin's continued assertions that culture ought to be a vehicle for passing on the national and moral codes of Russia's past, Medinskii's cries that art should be intelligible to all Russians, and the censorship of Serebrennikov's *Nureyev* and Kuliabin's *Tannhäuser* for illicit material, opera composers and collaborators seem to have come to similar conclusions about how to create staged works with the remaining (safe) options available to them.<sup>109</sup> I propose the term 'Russianist Realism' to describe this trend with two goals in mind: first, to evoke connections to the many styles (or in some cases, movements) to which it is related but not equivalent, particularly, Russian Realism, Socialist Realism, revivalist realism, and most recently, neo-traditionalism; and second, to draw a connection to the broader evolution of the concept of realism in the post-Soviet period.

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<sup>108</sup> Ministry of Culture official website, statistics division: [https://opendata.mkrf.ru/opendata/7705851331-stat\\_theatres\\_repertoire](https://opendata.mkrf.ru/opendata/7705851331-stat_theatres_repertoire). In addition to the world premieres I mention, there were many chamber operas and operas for children, but I am concerning myself only with full opera productions written for standard audiences.

<sup>109</sup> See, for example, 'Zasedanie soveta po kul'ture i iskusstvu 2 oktiabria 2013 goda', 2.10.2013.

Russianist Realism is the latest development in a tradition of ideological realism that the Soviets began, but has continued in various new iterations in contemporary Russian art.<sup>110</sup> In the late 1980s, Perestroika produced a wave of novels that espoused a kind of realism meant to debunk Socialist Realism, but which actually mimicked many of its patterns. Novels such as Anatolii Rybakov's *Deti Arbata* (*Children of the Arbat*) or Vladimir Dudintsev's *Belye odezhdny* (*White Robes*) reversed the messaging of Socialist Realism, but largely used the same plot devices and styles: they situated the action within the Soviet era and made heroes of the anti-regime characters, but used the very paradigms of Socialist Realist paranoid novels.<sup>111</sup> This short-lived flare was followed by a new type of realism in literature and film, better classified as hyper-naturalism, which arose mostly in the early 1990s. Called the 'chernukha', from 'chernyi', for black, these novels and films featured previously forbidden, graphic topics, such as every day cruelty, crime, humiliation, prison, penitentiary, and lots of sex (See Chapter 3 for a fuller discussion of this trend in films like *Malen'kaia Vera* [*Little Vera*]).<sup>112</sup> This was like the Russian Realism of Dostoevsky in that it included the plight of the simple folk, but unlike it in that it showed the lives of the simple folk as a 'concentration of social horrors', with no redeeming spiritual or philosophical message to soften the horror.<sup>113</sup> After Perestroika, and perhaps in response to these dark trends, however, novelists and filmmakers began to return to an approach more like traditional realism. Director Nikita Mikhalkov focused his films on 'realistic' approaches to Russia's history and present, while turning the emphasis away from the violent and horrible and toward the hopeful, and positive aspects of Russian character. His

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<sup>110</sup> There is an argument to be made that ideological realism began far earlier in Russian art, perhaps even with the *Peredvishniki* in painting, and with Nikolai Karamzin's *Bednaia Liza* in literature. I believe, however, that Socialist Realism is the particular brand of politically motivated realism that is the closer point of origin for Russianist Realism. I hope further study will be undertaken in this area.

<sup>111</sup> Mark Lipovetsky, 'Post-Soviet Literature between Realism and Postmodernism', in *The Cambridge Companion to Twentieth-Century Russian Literature*, eds. E.A. Dobrenko and Marina Balina (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011): 175-94. 177.

<sup>112</sup> Lipovetsky, 'Post-Soviet Literature', 179; Birgit Beumers, *Nikita Mikhalkov: Between Nostalgia and Nationalism*, (London: IBTauris & CoLtd, 2005), 114.

<sup>113</sup> Lipovetsky, 'Post-Soviet Literature', 179.

films *Utomlemnye solntsem* (*Burnt by the Sun*, 1994) and *Sibirskii tsiriul'nik* (*The Barber of Siberia*, 1997), in particular, both focus on the beauty of Russian nature, and Russian qualities of personality in comparison to Western ones.<sup>114</sup> It is a certain kind of rose-tinted realism which appeared in novels as well, such as Zakhar Prilepin's tome about National Bolshevik Party activists, *Sankia*, which reminded many critics of early Socialist Realism, like Maksim Gorky's *Mat'* (*Mother*).<sup>115</sup>

Simultaneously, a different trend emerged in the late 1990s: postmodernism became popular in the late 1990s before Putin's conservative cultural appointees redirected official policies toward more traditional styles. This strain of postmodernism deconstructed ideological discourses: it not only provided non-linear narratives, stories without conclusions (or clear protagonists), but it pointed out absurdities in the Soviet past and the Putin era present, and served as an alternative to the mass popular culture and the quasi-revival of Socialist Realism that inundated Russia during the decade.<sup>116</sup> Writers Sorokin (of *Blue Lard*) and Peleven both embraced this ethos, and wrote controversial novels that questioned the very nature of truth claims and deconstructed the quests for grand narratives and mythologies that had been characteristic of Soviet literature.<sup>117</sup> In theatre, a new wave of Russian drama emerged with the formation of the group called Teatr.doc, which began experimenting with what they called the 'verbatim' technique and documentarism – writing scripts compiled from real interviews focusing on specific social groups, often the marginalised.<sup>118</sup>

While theatre makers and novelists have room to experiment on low budgets, however, opera is not a low-budget affair, and must to some degree be aligned with those who hold the purse strings and the theatre keys. The Russianist Realism of opera that I describe represents

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<sup>114</sup> Beumers, *Nikita Mikhalkov*, 121.

<sup>115</sup> Lipovetsky, 'Post-Soviet', 184.

<sup>116</sup> Birgit Beumers and Mark Lipovetsky, 'Reality Performance: Documentary Trends in Post-Soviet Russian Theatre', *Contemporary Theatre Review: Beyond Postmodernism* 18, no. 3 (2008): 293-306. 295.

<sup>117</sup> Lipovetsky, 'Post-Soviet', 189.

<sup>118</sup> Beumers and Lipovetsky, 'Reality Performance', 301.

the swing back to neo-conservative sensibilities of the Putin era, and a return of the politically motivated ideological realism that permeated Socialist Realism. Since 2012, there have been eight fully-staged operas premiered at theatres in Russia written by seven different composers.<sup>119</sup> All six premiered in Moscow and St Petersburg conform to a certain musical, narrative, and visual aesthetic – Russianist Realism – while two, both premiered in Perm, represent aberrations from the generally more accepted style which is promoted in the two cultural capitals. As demonstrated by the six operas that serve as models, Russianist Realism encompasses standards regarding four elements: subject (from Russian literature), musical intelligibility (easy listening), costumes (traditional but with some modern innovation), and the correct amount of tolerated political satire.

The goal of these elements is to be unified with what is perceived as the Golden Age of Russian artistic tradition (with literary subjects and easy listening), but also to appear relevant, not obsolete (with historical/modern fusion costuming and satire of modern Russia). Two of these elements of Russianist Realism are proactive, and two are reactive. The modernised version of traditional clothing as well as the tolerated political satire both appear as fresh, twenty-first-century developments. These elements are introduced in order to show that there is still some innovation in opera, and to prevent the criticism that opera is a thing of the past, a museum piece, rather than a living artistic organism. Both elements originate more from the interpretation of the productions rather than from the scores, however, and I will analyse them in each of the productions in question. The other two elements – subject and melodicism – come from the scores, however, and are reactions to recent operatic history. First, regarding subject, in the twenty-first century, there has been a return to nineteenth-century literature – the Soviet obsession for operas on contemporary themes has been replaced by a

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<sup>119</sup> I use the list of premieres as registered in the open statistical data of the Ministry of Culture, which are the official productions that have included any state funding (which, in theory, should be the case with all opera productions in Russia in the last decade).

trend toward operas on accepted historical, and Russian national themes. The subjects are based on classic Russian literature or folk tales, or biographical tales that benefit from the name recognition of Russia's most hallowed heroes, such as Pushkin. The premieres in Russia include *Revizor (The Government Inspector)*, by Vladimir Dashkevich and based on a Nikolai Gogol play; *Kholstomer*, by Vladimir Kobekin, based on a Lev Tolstoy novella; *Chaadskii*, by Aleksandr Manotskov, based on Griboevdov's *Woe from Wit*; *Pushkin*, by Konstantin Boyarsky, a biographical opera of the poet; *The Lefthander* and *A Christmas Tale*, both by Shchedrin, and based respectively on a Nikolai Leskov novella and on Russian folklore. Finally in Perm *A Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich*, by Aleksandr Chaikovsky was based on the Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn novel of the same name.

The list of titles of twenty-first-century Russian operas is the first signal of a distinct trend emerging in Russia which diverges from the trend in Western opera. In *A History of Opera: The Last 400 Years*, Roger Parker and Carolyn Abbate argue that two dominant strands emerge in Western contemporary opera: a new kind of *Zeitoper*, offering contemporary themes, those based in living memory (John Adams' *The Death of Klinghoffer*, Nico Muhly's *Two Boys*, Mark-Anthony Turnage's *Anna Nicole*), and a return to the classic texts, whether Shakespeare, medieval myth, or antiquity (Thomas Adès *The Tempest*, Kaija Saariaho's *L'amour de Loin*, George Benjamin's *Written on Skin*).<sup>120</sup> Neither of these trends account for the majority of operas composed in the last twenty years in Russia, which Parker and Abbate do not address at all. The major premieres by Russian composers feature neither current events nor medieval myth, but rather, only themes that can be considered wholly Russian, emerging from their own literary canon. The only similarity this bears to the latter trend in the West is Adès' attraction to the British national canon (through Shakespeare), and the only similarity to the former trend,

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<sup>120</sup> Roger Parker and Carolyn Abbate, *A History of Opera: The Last Four Hundred Years* (London: Allen Lane, 2012), 537.

a new form of *Zeitoper*, is one of the two Perm exceptions to Russianist Realism – Chaikovskii’s *A Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich*. Overall, however, Russia’s close adherence to its own literary canon for operatic subject marks a sharp divergence from the West.

In addition to plot source, the other reactionary element is intentional melodicism, which is a reaction to anything that could be considered difficult to listen to – including and especially operas like Shchedrin’s *Lolita*. Composers from Boyarsky to Dashkevich both publicly pride themselves on not creating anything new, or producing any shocking sounds, but on continuing with tradition and writing operas that audiences actually like.<sup>121</sup> Dashkevich, in writing *The Government Inspector*, set it up against *Lolita*, which he described as ‘atonal’ and ‘tedious’, and claimed that his own opera would be different; it would return to the patterns that audiences actually enjoy.<sup>122</sup> Whether he heeded this criticism, or noticed the media’s praise of Dashkevich’s music, or simply read the signs of the times, Shchedrin would soon depart from his Berg-inspired operatic experimentation found in *Lolita*. His final work that was musically akin to *Lolita* was *Boiarina Morozova*, premiered in 2008. His next operas after 2012 would be much more melodic and dramatically fast-paced – in fact, much more like Dashkevich’s *The Government Inspector*, and like the compositions of his colleagues that would appear over the next ten years. Shchedrin ensured he would not be criticised for tediousness or atonality for *The Lefthander* and *A Christmas Tale*.

## The Moscow operas

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<sup>121</sup> See *GoodHouse.Ru*, 29.05.2019, ‘7 iunია sostoitsia moskovskaia prem’erf opery Konstantina Boyarskogo “Pushkin”’

<https://www.goodhouse.ru/home/afisha/7-iyunya-sostoitsya-moskovskaya-premera-opery-konstantina-boyarskogo-pushkin/>, and *Teatr-live.ru*, ‘Baian i lira’, 19.01.2008. <https://teatr-live.ru/2008/01/bayan-i-lira/>. Accessed 22.03.2020

<sup>121</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>122</sup> *Teatr-live.ru*, ‘Baian i lira’, 19.01.2008. <https://teatr-live.ru/2008/01/bayan-i-lira/>. Accessed 22.03.2020.

In order to understand fully this emerging trend, I will analyse the elements of Russianist Realism present in each of the eight premieres since 2012. Analysing these operas not only gives an overarching view of the development of Russian opera in the twenty-first century, but it also establishes a set of norms against which Shchedrin's operas can be evaluated. Four of these operas premiered in Moscow, and they represent the core of the new Russianist Realism. I use these operas to establish the four elements of Russianist Realism that I have identified, and how they manifest in opera. The first inklings of the new style came in the form of the opera *The Government Inspector*, which was premiered in 2007 on the Bolshoi Theatre's chamber stage (the main stage was still under renovation), and then a revised version was premiered in 2012. It was the first new opera at the Bolshoi Theatre since *The Children of Rosenthal*, and would set the tone for a very different kind of opera going forward. The opera was the idea of Boris Pokrovsky himself, the namesake of the Bolshoi's chamber stage, who was determined to produce an opera based on this play by Gogol for two reasons: first, it would complete his set (he had staged every other major work of Gogol up until this point); second, he wanted to expand the number of classic texts shown at the Bolshoi. This was a departure from – and an end to – the trend of endorsing new writing that the directors of the theatre had instigated in 2005 with *The Children of Rosenthal*.<sup>123</sup> His next priority, after ensuring that the opera would be based on a satisfactory classic, was to engage a composer who would write the kind of melodic music that he imagined. He pitched his idea to a composer whom he considered a 'famous melodist' – Dashkevich (b. 1934) – and instructed him that he wanted the opera to be 'a light, understandable, and democratic thing'.<sup>124</sup> Pokrovsky went further, by stipulating he

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<sup>123</sup> MusicSeasons.org, 'Vladimir Sergeevich Dashkevich Opera Revizor', 02.02.2018. <https://musicseasons.org/vladimir-sergeevich-dashkevich-opera-revizor/>. Accessed 22.03.2020.

<sup>124</sup> *Kommersant*. 'Perevrat' Khlestakova', 22.12.2007. <https://www.kommersant.ru/doc/838963>. Accessed 22.03.2020.

approved ‘no extra innovation’.<sup>125</sup> These sentiments suggest a revival, just as Solntseva had predicted, of some of the key aesthetic pillars of Socialist Realism.

Both the critics and the composer himself loudly sought to distance Dashkevich from other less melodic contemporary composers (I have mentioned his opinion of Shchedrin). He called himself the origin of the ‘conservative avant-garde’<sup>126</sup>, and stated that one of his goals with this opera was to show that ‘traditional opera is alive’ and that ‘atonal tediousness’ is not the only way forward for contemporary opera.<sup>127</sup> While most critics did praise Dashkevich’s opera for being easy to listen to,<sup>128</sup> or having ‘excellent music’,<sup>129</sup> others were disappointed with the quality, claiming that especially since Dashkevich purported to be the torch-bearer of traditional opera, they expected something better than poorly-written operetta.<sup>130</sup> This is where Shchedrin would improve upon Dashkevich, with more rigorous attention to orchestration and greater rhythmic interest.

The production history of this opera, however, is closely linked to its political satire.<sup>131</sup> Shortly after the Pokrovsky version opened in Moscow in 2007, the opera was removed, supposedly because the composer wanted to revise it into more of a ‘philosophical story rather than a satirical production’.<sup>132</sup> He was displeased that the opera had been received as a political

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<sup>125</sup> TV Kultura, ‘Opera “Revizor”. Prem’era segodnia’, 21.12.2007, [https://tvkultura.ru/article/show/article\\_id/39495/](https://tvkultura.ru/article/show/article_id/39495/). Accessed 27.03.2020.

<sup>126</sup> *Rossiskaia gazeta*, ‘V teatre Borisa Pokrovskogo...’, 24.12.2007. <https://rg.ru/2007/12/24/revizor.html> Accessed 20.03.2020.

<sup>127</sup> Teatr-live.ru, ‘Baian i lira’, 19.01.2008.

<sup>128</sup> *Kommersant*. ‘Perevrat’ Khlestakova’..

<sup>129</sup> *Teatrow* 2018. <https://teatrow.ru/msk/bolshoj-teatr/3025-revizor.html>

<sup>130</sup> Teatr-live.ru, ‘Baian i lira’

<sup>131</sup> The claim to the world premiere actually belongs not to the Bolshoi (though it asserts its right to the premiere on its website), but to the Novosibirsk Opera and Ballet Theatre. I write about it here as a Moscow opera, however, because all of the initiative for the opera’s genesis came from Moscow, and the production was shared at the last moment with Novosibirsk just a month before the Bolshoi version. Though there are no clear statements that explain why this happened, Dashkevich and other collaborators have made hints that Pokrovsky was too strictly limiting their creativity, and had cut many scenes out of their opera. This seems a plausible explanation, since the version in Novosibirsk lasted for three hours, while the version in Moscow, by the same authors, ended up with cuts and the running time was just two and a half hours.

See *Respublika*, ‘Ol’ga Ivanova: zritelei zhdet staryi novyi “Revizor”’, 20.10.2017, <http://respublika11.ru/2017/10/20/olga-ivanova-zriteley-zhdet-staryiy-novyy-revizor/>. Accessed 27.03.2020.

<sup>132</sup> *Ria Novosti*, 29.03.2012. <https://ria.ru/20120329/609141587.html>. Accessed 22.03.2020.

and social commentary, and wrote that his primary goal for revising and creating a second version was ‘to depart from satire and politics and move toward the Gogol of human interaction, toward the Gogol who wrote *Zapiski sumasshedshego* [*Diary of a Madman*] and *Mertvye dushi* [*Dead Souls*]’.<sup>133</sup> What Dashkevich may not have realised, however, was that the satire was the most popular element with the audience, and more importantly, it was not he who was responsible: it was the production itself, and particularly, the stage direction, that heightened the satire and the political connotations. As long as Olga Ivanova remained director, which she did for the second version as well, his musical edits were unlikely to make a significant difference. The production reopened in 2012, and ironically, was received as even more political and satirical than the first. Nearly all of the reviews in major publications, as well as online forums with comments from audience members, remarked on the aptness of a comparison between the ludicrous political situation of the opera and that of modern times. One review wrote, ‘*The Government Inspector* is the image of a Russian classic and a frighteningly relevant composition... It’s relevant to the point of pain...’ because ‘the bureaucrats, the psychology of the bureaucratic apparatus, the abuse of power, corruption and arbitrariness; all of this is contemporary, relevant, and topical.’<sup>134</sup> Another commented that, ‘The opera is interesting to watch and to listen to... The topic remains sharp and relevant to our times... but the costumes are within the epoch...’.<sup>135</sup> This political humour, however, was not enough to get the production banned. Rather, it is this kind of wit, which draws comparisons between ludicrous situations in historical plots and elements of contemporary society and politics, that has become a hallmark of modern Russian opera.

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<sup>133</sup> Ibid.

<sup>134</sup> *Zavtra.ru*, 02.03.2019.

[http://zavtra.ru/blogs/komediya\\_n\\_v\\_gogolya\\_revizor\\_na\\_kamernoj\\_scene\\_bol\\_shogo\\_teatra](http://zavtra.ru/blogs/komediya_n_v_gogolya_revizor_na_kamernoj_scene_bol_shogo_teatra). Accessed 25.03.2020.

<sup>135</sup> *Teatrow* 2018. <https://teatrow.ru/msk/bolshoj-teatr/3025-revizor.html>

The opera *Chaadskii*, premiered ten years later, demonstrates further development of these very same trends. *Chaadskii* was created at Moscow's Helikon Opera Theatre, founded in 1990 by director Dmitry Bertman when he was 23-years old.<sup>136</sup> Considering himself a disciple of Konstantin Stanislavsky and Vsevolod Meyerhold, Bertman initially aimed to make the Helikon Opera a place to experiment boldly in a way that was not possible at the Bolshoi. In the 1990s, he upheld this promise. Though the theatre struggled with funding during this turbulent decade, Bertman still managed to come up with some surprising productions, such as a 1996 version of Verdi's *Aida* that commented on the ongoing war with Chechnya, or a production in 2000 of *Lady Macbeth of Mtsensk* that drew parallels between Stalin's terror and post-Communist Moscow.<sup>137</sup> As Bertman grew his company and expanded his alliances, however, he forfeited some of the theatre's experimental edge. By 2007, he managed to persuade the government to finance a reconstruction of his opera house costing over 1.7 billion roubles (over £18 million).<sup>138</sup> As was common in Russia, one company after another won the bid, spent the money on nothing related to the theatre, and then spontaneously went bankrupt, delaying the project and costing extra funds.<sup>139</sup> By 2015, however, the project was completed, and a new, state-of-the-art, 500-seat opera house was opened in Moscow to join the three other functioning opera houses.

*Chaadskii* opened in this new opera theatre, just down the street from the Moscow Conservatory and the Kremlin. Its premiere would prove that by the 2010s, Helikon was no longer an experimental theatre, but was in perfect alignment with the fomenting trend of Russianist Realism. Based on Aleksandr Griboedov's satire *Gore ot uma* (*Woe from Wit*), the

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<sup>136</sup> *Moscow Info*, 'The Helikon Opera' <http://www.moscow.info/theaters/helikon-opera-theatre.html>. Accessed 15.03.2020.

<sup>137</sup> *Independent*, 'Never mind the Bolshoi', 3.3.2010 <https://www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/classical/news/never-mind-the-bolshoi-1934740.html>. Accessed 15.03.2020.

<sup>138</sup> *RIA Novosti*, 'Zavershenie restavratsii...', 11.11.2014. <https://ria.ru/20141111/1032774131.html>. Accessed 15.03.2020.

<sup>139</sup> *RIA Novosti*, 'Pervaia ochered...', 10.04.2015. <https://ria.ru/20150410/1057869235.html> Accessed 15.03.2020.

most famous play in the Russian language, the title blends the names of the protagonist, Chatskii, with the historical figure the protagonist is based on, Chaadaev, thus becoming ‘Chaadskii’. Using this text was the idea of influential producer Pavel Kaplevich (who likes to refer to himself as the re-incarnated Sergei Diaghilev) and composer Manotskov (b. 1972), who, like Dashkevich, would prove to be a ‘melodist’.<sup>140</sup> Once again, the formula of a classic text and traditional music pleased the press, and was hailed as a piece that was continuous with tradition. Critics praised Manotskov for following in the tradition of Tchaikovsky and Aleksandr Dargomyzhsky while still avoiding ‘routine conservatism’,<sup>141</sup> and for composing music that flowed from Russian tradition, but still incorporated a mix of influences: ‘The music of Manotskov is a fascinating mix of baroque and early classical opera traditions with the lyrical, Russian chamber singing style; it combines the Sufi tradition with a wide range of post-minimalism’.<sup>142</sup> Another influential critic wrote, ‘In contrast to experimental compositions, which erode the borders of the genre, *Chaadskii* looks and sounds like a traditional opera, but blurs the idea of what opera is and why it is needed.’<sup>143</sup> This last comment refers to the stage direction, and how this classic text would be reinterpreted as political satire.

*Chaadskii* was charged with commentary on contemporary Russia, and explicit political criticism – all orchestrated by the controversial director: Serebrennikov. *Chaadskii* was premiered less than a month before the scandal with his ballet *Nureyev*. In speaking about the opera, Serebrennikov admitted that he meant it to poke fun at the contemporary political establishment: ‘I believe that this is a very important human and civic statement about what is happening in Russia right now. This is a mould for our current mood, feelings, and doubts.’<sup>144</sup>

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<sup>140</sup> *Music Seasons*, ‘Aleksandr Platonovich Manotskov. Opera “Chaadskii”’, 19.12.2017.

<https://musicseasons.org/aleksandr-platonovich-manotskov-opera-chaadskij/> Accessed 15.03.2020.

<sup>141</sup> Ibid.

<sup>142</sup> Ibid.

<sup>143</sup> *Kommersant*, 3.06.2017, ‘Griboedovshchina pereshla v chaadaevshchinu’

[http://www.smotr.ru/2016/2016\\_helikon\\_chaadsky.htm](http://www.smotr.ru/2016/2016_helikon_chaadsky.htm)

<sup>144</sup> *Ria Novosti*, ‘V Gelikon-opere pokazhut operu “Chaadskii”...’, 01.06.2017

<https://ria.ru/20170601/1495525762.html>. Accessed 27.03.2020.

His production included provocative elements. The costumes were mostly modern, with some historically imitative pieces, like nineteenth century headdresses, which cast doubt on the time period of the action. The elites of the story, however, were clothed to look like contemporary Moscow oligarchs: the father of the wealthy Famusov family and his daughter Sofia wear the expensive state-fashion brand Bosco Sport, made famous for its role as creator of the Russian Olympic team uniforms in 2014; Sofia, in particular wears a Bosco Sport track jacket with large letters spelling 'RUSSIA'. One reviewer commented that there is no question that this clothing gives the characters the status of 'masters of life' because of the affinity with the stereotypes of oligarchs.<sup>145</sup> To make his point even more explicit, Serebrennikov planned the stage construction around two levels. The elite move around on platforms which are in turn lifted, supported, and transported by a cast of poorly-dressed, mud-speckled men who do not speak throughout the production. The director made no secret of the message. He explained, 'There are two worlds: the world of the successful, rich people, who live in nice houses in splendid conditions, who are occupied with their spa treatments and their little romantic intrigues. And then there is a different world of people who live on the dirty earth. They, like Atlas, hold the platforms upon which the happy rich and successful people, clad in their chic white suits, stomp around.'<sup>146</sup>

Like *The Government Inspector*, however, *Chaadskii* was not shut down. Serebrennikov got away with this because this level of criticism was just tolerated: while it mocked high society and bureaucracy, it strayed away from criticising Putin himself – a tendency evident in all Russianist Realist operas. The political satire made the opera relevant and modern, while maintaining all of the other elements of a neo-traditionalist model. The music was intelligible and melodic, the costumes clever (and once again, the modern-historical

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<sup>145</sup> *Otzovik*, 'Opera "Chaadskii"...skandal'no.', 28.04.2018, [https://otzovik.com/review\\_6406012.html](https://otzovik.com/review_6406012.html). Accessed 27.03.2020.

<sup>146</sup> *Ria Novosti*, 'V Gelikon-opere pokazhut operu "Chaadskii"...', 01.06.2017 <https://ria.ru/20170601/1495525762.html>. Accessed 27.03.2020.

blend), and the libretto irreproachable (after all, it was Griboedov). While the fact remains that performances of this opera continued, it was a matter of weeks after the premiere that Serebrennikov would not free to see them; he would be under house arrest. It is unlikely, however, that *Chaadskii* was a significant factor in his arrest: the following year, in 2018, Serebrennikov won the prize of best opera director at the Golden Mask for *Chaadskii* in absentia. As absurd as this award presentation was, an even greater irony occurred when the committee – filled with government officials – awarded the theatre of which Serebrennikov was still officially the director, the Gogol Centre, a special prize for ‘for creating a space of creative freedom’ – when he was not even allowed to appear to receive the award.<sup>147</sup> This signalled that it was not *Chaadskii* that was not the problem; the opera was successful. It was Serebrennikov himself – charismatic, unpredictable, and uncontrollable – who was the problem for the establishment; they would reward his theatre, and his productions, but leave him under arrest.

The other young theatre in Moscow, the Novaia Opera, followed suit with listenability and with political edge. Formed just a year after the Helikon Opera, but with more resources from the start, by 1997, the Novaia Opera was bequeathed a brand-new hall in the Ermitage Garden in Moscow.<sup>148</sup> It also turned its attention to Western collaboration early, and in 2011, hired British conductor Jan Latham-Koenig as its chief conductor, the first foreign chief conductor of an opera house in Moscow. Latham-Koenig was instrumental in establishing the collaboration around *Pushkin* as an opera that was co-produced by Novaia Opera in Moscow and Grange Park Opera in Surrey, UK. *Pushkin* was first performed in concert-version in 2017 in Russia, followed by the world premiere of the staged version at Grange Park in 2018, and the Russian premiere of the staged version at Novaia Opera in 2019.

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<sup>147</sup> *Moscow Times*, ‘Golden Mask 2018: Sad and Hopeful’, 04.16.2018  
<https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2018/04/16/golden-mask-2018-sad-and-hopeful-a61184>

<sup>148</sup> *Ibid.*

Even though Latham-Koenig was behind the fundraising, the opera itself was permeated by Russianist Realist components. The composer, Boyarsky, who went to school in Russia but settled with his family in the UK in 1991, made his intentions clear: he was aiming to situate himself within the Russian tradition. The composer affirmed that he was not trying to invent a new musical language, but to best express the emotions of the dramatic material he was working with by using tried and true tools. Boyarsky explained, ‘I did not try to create a super modern composition, or to shock anyone with original sounds and effects. I wrote thinking about presenting distinct characters, their anxieties and their being’.<sup>149</sup> The Russian press largely agreed with the composer’s own assessment, and praised the composition for its melodicism and understandability. A *TASS* article claimed that it is written ‘in the canon of nineteenth-century opera’, and for that reason, the author conjectured, the audience members found it to be a rare contemporary opera which they could enjoy.<sup>150</sup> Another article praised Boyarsky because he did not try to ‘shock anyone with harsh modern sounds.’<sup>151</sup> After all, the article continues, it is difficult to shock modern audiences that way in any case. Rather, the author insists that he managed to encapsulate the spirit of the epoch because of the closeness of his style to the romantic lyricism of the nineteenth century.<sup>152</sup>

The production, similarly, lived up to the model. Staged by the designer Igor Ushakov, it featured historical costumes, which played to the expectations that Russian opera-goers have built over decades of watching Pushkin-based operas, such as *Evgenii Onegin* (*Eugene Onegin*) and *Pikovaia dama* (*The Queen of Spades*). The florid nineteenth-century attire, however, is paired by a modern set and video design, as well as scant props. Like in *Kholstomer*, as I explain below, these elements act to put an interpretive lens over the nineteenth century by bringing

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<sup>149</sup> Ibid.

<sup>150</sup> *TASS*, ‘V Moskve sostoialos’ prem’era opera Konstantina Boiarskogo “Pushkin”’, 8.6.2019. <https://tass.ru/kultura/6527649>. Accessed 28.03.2020.

<sup>151</sup> *Muzykal’nye sezony*, ‘Konstantin Boyarsky. Opera “Pushkin”, Poet i tsar’, 18.09.2019. <https://musicseasons.org/konstantin-boyarskij-opera-pushkin-poet-i-car/>. Accessed 28.03.2020.

<sup>152</sup> Ibid.

the overall image into adherence with the minimalist aesthetic of the twenty-first century; it heightens the sense of the twenty-first century creating a manufactured, nostalgic nineteenth century. Rather than an attempt at Stanislavskian realism, it is a version of nostalgic realism, that is, Russianist Realism.

Like *Chaadskii* and *The Government Inspector*, there is just a hint of criticism of contemporary Russia, enough to maintain relevance despite its historical glaze. The opera *Pushkin* capitalises on the fame of the title character, Russia's most acclaimed poet, and one other character: as the Novaia Opera website explains, it is the story, 'of two dominant men – the nation's Poet and the nation's Tsar, a relationship that starts with mutual admiration and mutual need.'<sup>153</sup> Much of the plot revolves around the relationship of these two men, and on the question of artistic freedom, the place of an artist, and a ruler's right (and/or obligation) to censor dangerous material. With the Serebrennikov and *Tannhäuser* affairs in recent memory, this question was all the more relevant, and yet, it did not rile the ire of officials because the criticism was cautious: the production shies away from critiquing the tsar himself, and falls back on criticising the system he created, one run by bureaucrats who ruin things. Such subtle criticism was tolerated.

The final world premiere of an opera in Moscow in this period took place on the Bolshoi's chamber stage in 2012, and it followed the lead of *The Government Inspector*. *Kholstomer*, based on a Tolstoy novella, was once again proposed by Pokrovsky, who this time recruited composer Kobekin (b. 1947).<sup>154</sup> Kobekin was well-established, though not famous, at the time, and described on the website of the theatre as 'one of the most performed contemporary composers' who also displays the 'brightest colours of Russian opera' in this

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<sup>153</sup> Novaia Opera website, 'Pushkin', <https://novayaopera.ru/en/afisha-i-bilety/repertuar/pushkin/>. Accessed 28.03.2020.

<sup>154</sup> *Music Seasons*, 'Opera "Kholstomer"', 13.04.2016. <https://musicseasons.org/opera-xolstomer/>. Accessed 25.03.2020.

new work.<sup>155</sup> He wrote the expected, melodic score, which critics acknowledged by comparing the opera favourably to ‘the tradition’: one reviewer stated that in *Kholstomer*, ‘Kobekin showed himself to be a worthy continuer of the tradition of Russian opera, which went through a great path of development between Mikhail Glinka and Dmitry Shostakovich’.<sup>156</sup> Others noted that while his opera includes influences of Shostakovich and Prokofiev, it also relies on earlier Russian giants: much of the later style of Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov and Georgii Sviridov can be heard in his music.<sup>157</sup> They remarked that he combines folk melodies with academic compositional tendencies, ‘such as polyrhythms’ (this seems to be one of the only categories contemporary Russian reviewers are able to think of to suggest something is ‘modern’).<sup>158</sup> *Kholstomer* is positioned and advertised as a valid continuation of the tradition, and Kobekin as traditional, but just modern enough to not be seen as obsolete. Internet forums with audience discussions suggest that responses to this approach were favourable; attenders enjoyed everything from the plot, which developed ‘dynamically’ and ‘sharply’, to the fact that it is a ‘very Russian opera’, both ‘melodic and modern’.<sup>159</sup> One commented that the three-hour opera ‘flew by’ because of how engaging it was.<sup>160</sup>

*Kholstomer* is also the perfect opera to demonstrate the new aesthetic in costuming – historical, but with a modern twist. Just as Kobekin was positioned as traditional but not obsolete, the visual elements share this conception. Characters wear nineteenth-century military jackets, but leave them open and display T-shirts with designer logos underneath; the characters who play horses wear leather mini-skirts and leather bridles. The set is minimal, but with just enough nineteenth-century props to maintain the reminder that the action is taking

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<sup>155</sup> Pokrovsky Stage Website: <http://opera-pokrovsky.com/o-teatre-2/repertuar/holstomer>

<sup>156</sup> MusicSeasons, ‘Opera “Kholstomer”’, 13.04.2016.

<sup>157</sup> Operanews.ru, ‘Koni - kak liudi’, 07.10.2012. <https://www.operanews.ru/12100709.html>. Accessed 16.03.2020.

<sup>158</sup> MusicSeasons, ‘Opera “Kholstomer”’, 13.04.2016.

<sup>159</sup> *Dervishv*, Blog, 27.03.2013. <https://dervishv.livejournal.com/448869.html>. Accessed 15.03.2020.

<sup>160</sup> *Afisha*, ‘Kholstomer’, <https://www.afisha.ru/performance/90976/>. Accessed 15.03.2020.

place at another time. The visual elements might have argued for at least a 50% chance that the action was taking place in contemporary times, but this did not bother the stalwart reviewers, determined to see Tolstoy where he belongs – in the nineteenth century. As one critic noted in an observation echoed by many audience members, ‘despite the fact that the plot is eternal, it is set in the time the action took place – Russia in the nineteenth century’.<sup>161</sup>

The aesthetic of the production and costumes – historical with contemporary flare or alteration – reflects a right-wing fashion trend which emerged in the early 2000s in Russian society at large. In the late 1980s, a fashion subculture developed known as *stiob* (literally, ‘banter’), where adherents found ways to appropriate tsarist and Soviet clothing and wear it in ways they considered ironic.<sup>162</sup> By the early 2000s, however, several overtly pro-Putin fashion designers started rehabilitating the idea of *stiob*, blending the historical and the modern for pro-state purposes rather than ironically dissident purposes. Antonina Shapovalova formed the brand *PUTINVERSTEHER* (literally, Putin-understander, or Putin sympathiser), and designed an exclusive line for the pro-Kremlin youth league *Nashi*. Her work features exactly these blends: modern, wearable versions of Soviet and tsarist clothing. In her line for *Nashi* released in 2010, called *Pobeda #22 (Victory No. 22)*, she cleverly altered Soviet military uniforms into casual youth wear, and included T-shirts with slogans promoting military service and raising birth rates in Russia.<sup>163</sup> Other designers such as Aleksandr Konasov, and brands such as *Anyavanya* and *Bosco Sport*, all favoured with prime display window locations near the Kremlin, share in these nostalgic but practical fashions. The similarity to Kremlin-approved high fashion and what is seen on the opera stage – in six of the eight productions I will address – does not necessarily mean that the costume designers were attempting to show support for

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<sup>161</sup> Ibid.

<sup>162</sup> Ekaterina Kalinina, ‘Fashionable Irony and Stiob: the Use of Soviet Heritage in Russian Fashion Design and Soviet Subcultures’, in *Cultural and Political Imaginaries in Putin's Russia*, eds. Niklas Bernsand and Barbara Törnquist Plewa (Leiden: Brill, 2019): 192-210. 194.

<sup>163</sup> Ibid, 203-5.

the Kremlin, but it does suggest that those who cohered with these government-approved styles already knew that their productions would be less likely to be censored or reprimanded.

### **The Perm operas**

The remaining four premieres between 2012-2019 that I will discuss occurred at two theatres which represent opposing styles: the two Shchedrin operas at the Mariinsky Theatre, and two operas at the Perm Opera and Ballet Theatre. Six of the eight operas premiered in Russia from 2012-2019 belong to the category of Russianist Realism, and those same six were produced in Moscow and St Petersburg, the two cultural capitals. Up until now, this thesis has focused predominantly on these two cities: Moscow, Shchedrin's home until 1992, and the city that dominated artistic production and policy in the Soviet period; and St Petersburg, the city that has claimed pride of place in the twenty-first century due to the expanding global influence of the Mariinsky Theatre. But one opera house 1200 kilometres east of Moscow has broken from the trend of Russianist Realism and has fostered a much more experimental ethos than its cousins, one that more closely resembles the postmodernist aesthetics that have developed in contemporary Russian theatre. The Perm Opera and Ballet Theatre, even as far back as the Soviet days, started to be known as a hotspot for the avant-garde, and the two operatic premieres it has hosted in the last decade confirm that it is still willing to do things differently.<sup>164</sup>

Perm's first premiere of the twenty-first century deviated slightly – but significantly – from the tropes of Russianist Realism evident in the Moscow theatres: it was still based on a Russian literary source, but a literary source not universally approved. Georgii Isaakian, artistic director of the theatre from 1991-2010, took the risk of expanding the idea of what would be

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<sup>164</sup> *The New York Times*, 22.07.2011. <https://www.nytimes.com/2011/07/24/travel/perm-russias-emerging-cultural-hotspot.html>. Accessed 28.03.2020.

an acceptable theme for an opera by selecting a text graver and more sensitive in subject than the rest of the operas composed in modern Russia. In 2008, he came up with the idea of turning Solzhenitsyn's *A Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich* into an opera, and pitched it to a handful of composers.<sup>165</sup> Only one composer thought this would be a possible, let alone worthwhile, endeavour: Aleksandr Chaikovskii.<sup>166</sup> Isaakian was passionate about bringing this story to life in Perm because of the city's close connection to the history of the GULAGs: many of the camps were only a few kilometres from the city's border, and to this day, the city maintains an open-air museum called 'Perm-36', which preserves one of the camps as it would have looked during operation.<sup>167</sup> Solzhenitsyn, however, though practically sainted in the West, is still not considered a canonical figure by many Russians: as one author explained, in Russia, people either think of Solzhenitsyn as a 'warrior of the truth' or as a 'traitor to the country'.<sup>168</sup> There was also a matter of the Perm audiences: many that had themselves been sent to GULAGs felt this was not an appropriate theme for an opera, and that this was not something that should be commemorated.<sup>169</sup>

Isaakian and Chaikovskii, who wrote the libretto together, had their task cut out for them. They needed to win over audiences who were sceptical that such a dark and controversial topic could be suited to the opera house. They were emboldened by the fact, however, that Perm audiences have been proven to approve of experiments: in a recent study of opera-goers in Perm, a majority of people surveyed ranked 'modernity' as a top feature that would attract them to an opera, that is, as they defined it, the desire to see that the theatre is not a museum

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<sup>165</sup> *Music Seasons*, 'Aleksandr Vladimirovich Chaikovskii: opera odin den'...', 26.10.2018.

<https://musicseasons.org/aleksandr-vladimirovich-chajkovskij-opera-odin-den-ivana-denisovicha/>

<sup>166</sup> Ibid.

<sup>167</sup> *Peterburgskii teatral'nyi zhurnal*, 'Odin den' i tseliaia zhizn', 03.2020. <http://ptj.spb.ru/blog/odin-den-i-celaya-zhizn/>. Accessed 28.03.2020.

<sup>168</sup> Ibid. This comment was made in response to the revised version of this opera, staged in Moscow on the Bolshoi Theatre's Pokrovsky Stage.

<sup>169</sup> Svoboda.ru, interview with composer, 17.06.2009. <https://www.svoboda.org/a/1779128.html> Accessed 28.03.2020.

that only preserves tradition, but that it is alive and is generating new ideas.<sup>170</sup> This prevailing attitude acted in *Ivan Denisovich's* favour. The overall reception of the opera was positive. Unlike the reviews of the other operas we have examined, however, there were no mentions of the composer being a torch-bearer of Russian tradition, or of being a celebrated 'melodist'; rather, discussions of the composer, and even the music, were sparse. The few reviews that did highlight the music mentioned the mix of influences displayed. One observed, 'despite lots of chromatics and difficult, unstable metres, which changed in nearly every bar, Chaikovskii's score, thanks to plenty of refrains and repetitions, and the large amount of quotes and stylisations, came across as enlightened rather than overloaded; it also didn't aspire to some grandiose symphonic scale, which helped it.'<sup>171</sup> Another commented that the score 'was full of emotional waves, from the absurd to the cathartic, and combines traditional Bach-style polyphony with motives from city romances, Soviet popular music, folk music, and quotes from Prokofiev's *Ivan Groznyi* [*Ivan the Terrible*]'.<sup>172</sup> Reception of the music was neither derogatory, nor glowing. The music was simply not seen as the primary attraction, or the main point, of this opera. The focus of public conversation was on the subject. Most reviews and articles, across all three productions, referred to the importance of this topic being shown on stage, and of not forgetting, especially since the discussions of the GULAG had grown silent in recent years.<sup>173</sup> In this way, this opera coheres more with Parker and Abbate's idea of a new *Zeitoper* in the twenty-first century than it does to Russianist Realism: though based on a novel, it is inextricably connected to recent history, and the coherence – and indeed, the importance – of the opera itself relies on the political and historical circumstances in which it is situated.

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<sup>170</sup> Iuliia Papushina, 'Is Opera Attendance Fashionable? The Case of Perm Opera and Ballet Theatre', *SSRN Electronic Journal*, 2015, 10.

<sup>171</sup> *Rossiskaia gazeta*, 'T'ma i svet Ivana Denishovicha', 19.05.2009. <http://www.rg.ru/2009/05/19/geroy-site.html>. Accessed 28.03.2020.

<sup>172</sup> *Novye izvestie*, 19.05.2009, <http://www.newizv.ru/news/2009-05-19/108989/> Accessed 20.03.2020.

<sup>173</sup> See: <https://www.afisha.ru/performance/206476/>; <https://zen.yandex.ru/media/parfenov/ob-opere-odin-den-ivana-denisovicha-5c16a5465bee8800a916a922>; [http://www.solzhenitsyn.ru/o\\_tvorchestve/v\\_iskusstve/?ELEMENT\\_ID=330](http://www.solzhenitsyn.ru/o_tvorchestve/v_iskusstve/?ELEMENT_ID=330); <https://properm.ru/afisha/news/10244/?forceMobile=1>

The visual aesthetic – like the literary subject and the insufficiently melodic music – broke ranks with Russianist Realism. Whereas the other operas crafted an aesthetic of a nostalgic version of the nineteenth century, never aspiring to realism but always incorporating elements of modern art, video or costume so as to remove that pretension, everything about *Ivan Denisovich* was too real. It is much more like the documentarism and verbatim techniques of Teatr.doc than the rose-tinted nostalgia of the Moscow operas. Though Isaakian proclaimed that he wanted to avoid melodrama and ‘making light of’ horrible events by keeping a critical distance in the staging from anything that was too similar to reality, the production, in fact, came across as hyper-realism.<sup>174</sup> The combination of immersive lighting, strobes, an intimately-sized theatre, cast members walking through the audience, and impeccably researched and accurate costumes left almost nothing to be imagined. The overall impression from audience members was that it was so realistic it was immersive,<sup>175</sup> and that it looked like a photograph reel or documentary film from the time.<sup>176</sup> The odd juxtaposition of producing a realist opera about a forced labour camp within the walls of a gilded theatre was not missed. One commentator welcomed the change from the trend in theatre toward ever-increasing glamour, ‘bourgeois mainstream’ and ‘frilly kitsch’; this opera, she stated, was a reminder of what our core values should be.<sup>177</sup> Other theatre directors ended up agreeing with this sentiment, so much so that the Mikhailovsky Theatre brought the Perm production to St Petersburg the following year, and the Bolshoi Theatre produced its own version to coincide with the author’s hundredth birthday in 2018. While this opera may not have represented the compositional style most sought after by the cultural capitals, both recognised a place for this opera in their repertoires, and were willing to show it once it had proven successful elsewhere.

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<sup>174</sup> See televised interview with Isaakian: <https://www.bolshoi.ru/performances/7062/details>

<sup>175</sup> <https://www.afisha.ru/performance/206476/>. Accessed 28.03.2020.

<sup>176</sup> Sholzhenitsyn’s official website, [http://www.solzhenitsyn.ru/o\\_tvorchestve/v\\_iskusstve/?ELEMENT\\_ID=330](http://www.solzhenitsyn.ru/o_tvorchestve/v_iskusstve/?ELEMENT_ID=330)

<sup>177</sup> <http://ptj.spb.ru/blog/odin-den-i-celaya-zhizn/>. Accessed 28.03.2020.

If *Ivan Denisovich* strayed from trodden paths in only two aspects – plot and musical intelligibility – the other Perm premiere abandoned trodden paths altogether. *Nosferatu*, by Dmitri Kurliandsky, premiered at the Perm Ballet and Opera Theatre in 2014 and is to date, without competition, the most radical operatic creation in modern Russian history. It was the initiative of then music director, Greek conductor Teodor Currentzis, who recruited Kurliandsky and a team of other avant-garde artists: librettist Dimitris Yalamas, choreographer Theodoros Terzopoulos (who is also a specialist in Greek tragedy), and finally, performance artist Jannis Kounellis.<sup>178</sup> Unlike any of the other operas listed as original compositions by the Ministry of Culture in 2012-2019, this production was not based on Russian literature at all, but on the theme of vampirism imagined as an interpretation of the Persephone myth. In addition, this opera had no obvious pretensions to satire, or to critique of Russian politics; it was something entirely other because for once, this was an opera that was not about Russia at all.

The creators of *Nosferatu* were not aiming to continue tradition, or to be melodic and audience-pleasing as the rest of the operas were, but to shock. Kurliandsky admitted that he wanted to rip opera out of the ‘glib mainstream’ and return it to its ritualistic origins.<sup>179</sup> Indeed, there is almost no traditional singing or traditional playing of instruments at all. Instead, Kurliandsky draws out unusual sounds and timbres from the instruments and the voice, and includes detailed instructions for how to move bows and fingers across the instruments in unconventional ways.<sup>180</sup> Above all, he strives to emulate the feeling of ritual by reproducing the rhythm of breath, and trying to get his audience to subconsciously experience this.<sup>181</sup> By so explicitly and publicly setting themselves apart from traditional opera, the creators made sure

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<sup>178</sup> *The Financial Times*, ‘Nosferatu: Perm Opera and Ballet Theatre’, 20.06.2014.

<https://www.ft.com/content/20a647f2-f551-11e3-afd3-00144feabdc0>. Accessed 28.03.2020.

<sup>179</sup> *Proza.ru*, ‘Nosferatu: Opera’. 25.02.2015. <https://www.proza.ru/2015/02/26/2265>. Accessed 28.03.2020.

<sup>180</sup> *Rossiskaia gazeta*, ‘Nosferatu’. 17.06.2014. <https://rg.ru/2014/06/17/nosferatu.html>. Accessed 28.03.2020.

<sup>181</sup> *Ibid.*

they were not being judged by the standards of the ‘Russian tradition’ – old or new. The press responded with appropriate confusion about whether this was even opera. Susan Moore of the *Financial Times* described it not as opera at all, but as ‘a *Gesamkunstwerk* bringing together voice, orchestra, ritual, theatre, imagery and dance’.<sup>182</sup> In another article entitled, ‘Nosferatu is not for the faint-of-heart’, a Russian reviewer commented on how disturbing he found the opera, noting that, ‘the show was permeated by a dark energy, and therefore it was appropriate that the theatre limited the viewership to only those over 18.’<sup>183</sup> This production was not censored, and did receive significant international attention. And yet, it was not rewarded by invitations to Moscow and St Petersburg like *Ivan Denisovich*. It was allowed to continue, but only in Perm. At the time of this writing, out of all of Russia’s scores of opera houses, Perm is still the most active host of operas that are not Russianist Realist.<sup>184</sup>

### **Shchedrin and the St Petersburg operas**

I return, finally, to the event that opened this chapter, the premiere of *The Lefthander* at the Mariinsky-2, and to the character who has centrally occupied this thesis: Rodion Shchedrin. From the early 2000s to 2020, he has risen to a position of power and prominence in modern Russia unparalleled by any other composer, and has earned pride of place at the Mariinsky Theatre, where the only two world premieres of the last two decades have been his. This rise was not accidental, but part of a pattern: it is yet another instance of Shchedrin’s ability to decipher his environment and adapt himself to whatever the occasion calls for, the

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<sup>182</sup> Ibid.

<sup>183</sup> *Classical Music News*, ‘Opera “Nosferatu” slabonervnym ne smotret’. 20.06.2014. <https://www.classicalmusicnews.ru/reports/opera-nosferatu-slabonervnym-ne-smotret/>. Accessed 28.03.2020.

<sup>184</sup> Opera is not the only art form that has witnessed more experimentation outside of Moscow. Several authors have noted the greater experimentation visible in the non-metropolitan Russian drama scene during the last decade, particularly in cities like Ekaterinburg and Togliatti, but also in Chelyabinsk, Kemerova, and Perm’. See *New Drama in Russian*, 18, 27, 262.

same ability that earned him success as he adapted his compositional and behavioural strategies through each Soviet decade, and then through a transition to the West.

His eventual success in post-Soviet Russia, however, occurred circuitously via Germany and success abroad first. The fall of the Soviet Union prompted the exodus of some of its highest-profile composers: like Sofia Gubaidulina and Alfred Schnittke, who chose Hamburg, Germany as a new base, and Edison Denisov who moved to France, Shchedrin also left for Europe, resettling in Munich in 1992. His emigration initiated a flurry of international commissions, and he was chiefly occupied with his work in Europe and the United States for the ensuing fifteen years, including commissions from the Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra (Concerto for Trumpet and Orchestra, 1993), Zürich's Tonhalle Orchestra (Concerto Cantabile for Violin and String Orchestra, 1998), the Nuremberg Symphony Orchestra (Preludium to Beethoven's Symphony No. 9 for Orchestra, 1999), the Bayern Radio Symphony Orchestra (Symphony No. 3, 'Scenes of Russian Fairy Tales', 2000), and many other respected institutions. As his work attracted more attention abroad however, it also started to become more popular at home, as is evidenced by a substantial festival of his music mounted in Moscow in 1998 in honour of his sixty-fifth birthday.<sup>185</sup> It was also an especially productive time in his operatic career. While between 1961-1994 he wrote a total of three operas, one per decade, between 2002-2015 he composed four: two chamber operas and two with full orchestration. In keeping with his own tendency to adapt classics, the subject matter of all four stems from Russian literature, folklore, and history. In 2002, *Ocharovannyi strannik* (*The Enchanted Wanderer*), based on a short story by Leskov, premiered with the New York Philharmonic under the baton of Lorin Maazel, who had commissioned the work.<sup>186</sup>

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<sup>185</sup> See V. Kholopova, 'Neizvestnyi Shchedrin: O festivale "Muzyka i vremia" - i ne tol'ko', *Muzykal'naiia Akademiia* 663, no. 2 (1998): 9-15.

<sup>186</sup> Though Shchedrin talked his way into a commission, this work was not received well by critics. A reporter from the *Wall Street Journal* commented that *The Enchanted Wanderer* was 'not a ringing endorsement for contemporary Russian composition'. *Wall Street Journal*, Heidi Waleson, 20.02.2015.

Shchedrin's next chamber opera was his invitation back into the Russian musical scene after a long absence: *Boiarina Morozova*, for chorus, four soloists, trumpet, and percussion, was premiered at the Mariinsky Theatre and based on one of the earliest literary autobiographies in the Russian language – *Zhizn' Protopopa Avvakuma* (*The Life of Archpriest Avvakum*, written by himself). It was only performed in concert version, rather than being fully staged, and yet, it marked the beginning of a relationship with the Mariinsky Theatre, and its director, Gergiev, that would shape his career and reputation over the next decade. The following years saw revivals and new versions of nearly all of his ballets at the Mariinsky Theatre: *Konek-gorbunok* (*The Little Humpbacked Horse*) in 2009 and *Anna Karenina* in 2010, both choreographed by Alexei Ratmansky, and the premiere of his 1967 *Carmen-Suite* in the original Alberto Alonso choreography, also in 2010. The following year, in 2011, the Mariinsky initiated a new production of his 1977 *Dead Souls*, this time by director Vasilii Barkhatov. It was in 2013, however, that *The Lefthander* premiered, Shchedrin's first, full-length opera debut in Russia since *Dead Souls* nearly forty years earlier. Less than two years later, in December 2015, his next opera premiered on the very same stage, but it could scarcely have been more different from *The Lefthander*. Where the first was a pessimistic, brooding tale about the failures of bureaucracy in tsarist Russia and warnings about the seductions of Western capitalism, *A Christmas Tale* was instead a light-hearted, folklore-inspired comedy – albeit embedded with its own political satire. Both, however, managed to fit the categories required of opera for the new Russia.

For most of his career, Shchedrin produced operas that were unique in style when compared to the work of his contemporaries.<sup>187</sup> In this new era, however, Shchedrin returned to the inclination of his early career works, such as *Not Love Alone* – to please audiences, and

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<sup>187</sup> See chapters 1, 2, and 3, where I compare his operas with those of his contemporaries in the 1960s, 1970s, and 1990s.

to meet the current expectation of classic texts, melodic intelligibility, and harmless political or societal criticism. His success with this combination of traits in opera, however, was neither guaranteed, nor without competition. In fact, he competed with a dense crowd of hopeful composers. The Mariinsky Theatre examined many new operas for possible production between 2000-2020. The Mariinsky's (and in particular Gergiev's) process for testing a composition for its potential is to premiere the work in concert version first, and then to determine whether it would be a worthwhile piece to spend the formidable budget required for a fully-staged version. It is, in essence, their research and development phase for the opera house.<sup>188</sup> Since 2012, the Mariinsky has featured four different operas in concert version, in 2014, 2016, 2018, and 2019, which all fit the pre-production criteria for Russianist Realism: *Doktor Zhivago* by David Kravitskii based on the novel by Boris Pasternak; *Zatmenie (Eclipse)* by Aleksandr Raskatov based on the life of one of the Decembrist revolutionaries; *Gore ot uma (Woe from Wit)* by Boris Grabovskii and based on the same play by Griboedov that inspired *Chaadskii*; and finally, *Bela* by Leonid Klinichev based on the novella *Geroi nashego vremeni (A Hero of our Times)* by Mikhail Lermontov. Every single one of these operas was described in Mariinsky press releases as melodic, lyrical, and consistent with the Russian tradition of Rimsky-Korsakov and Piotr Tchaikovsky: in other words, musical continuity, rather than musical innovation, was the standard. Some were warmly greeted by the critics as well. Regarding *Bela*, one reviewer commented, 'The usually sceptical St Petersburg public accepted the opera warmly...', and that one could tell how happy the audience was 'to hear an opera in the classical tradition'.<sup>189</sup> The author also used the ticket sales to legitimise his claims of the opera's success: 'In defence of the popularity of these [traditional] forms among listeners even to this day stands the fact that the not-at-all-small Mariinsky Concert Hall was packed until

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<sup>188</sup> The observation comes from my work at the Mariinsky Theatre and conversations with Valery Gergiev about the decision process for selecting new operas for premiere.

<sup>189</sup> *Zhivoi Rostov*, 'Nasha Bela v Mariinskom', 11.12.2014. <http://werawolw.ru/?p=11821>. Accessed 28.03.2020.

bursting, and even had to turn people away.’<sup>190</sup> Despite the fact that the Mariinsky press office and the independent reviewers were convinced this would become a classic of the repertoire, as of the time of writing, six years after the premiere of the concert version, no opera house has yet decided to fully stage this composition, or any of the other three mentioned.

Only Shchedrin’s operas have been fully staged. While the *Lefthander* is a fascinating work in its own right, and the one that crowned his position in the theatre, I will draw attention to his second Mariinsky opera, *A Christmas Tale*, for one specific reason: it is the opera that he thought would be the final completed work of his life, the final message he would leave for the Russian public.<sup>191</sup> His long-harboured ambition was to leave this legacy in the form of a *Nutcracker* for the new century – only as an opera, not a ballet.<sup>192</sup> He planned to write ‘a mirror-image version’, to use his own words (though he has never specified what he meant by the mirror).<sup>193</sup> If the *Nutcracker* was the creation of the combined genius of a Russian composer (Piotr Tchaikovsky), a French choreographer (Marius Petipa), and a German author (E.T.A. Hoffmann), Shchedrin’s fairy tale combined influences just as eclectic. The story for his final opera had piqued his interest at least thirty years earlier, when he began writing the musical *Nina and the Twelve Months* for a Japanese production company in 1987.<sup>194</sup> The libretto for *Nina*, though based on a play by the Russian author Samuel Marshak, had been adapted with significant alterations for the musical by a Japanese writer, Toshio Fujita.<sup>195</sup> When beginning to write his own fairy tale libretto, Shchedrin returned not just to the Marshak play, but to the Japanese adaptation of it, and retained the scene-structure of the musical for his opera, with only a few cuts and substitutions.<sup>196</sup> In addition, Shchedrin included other Russian folk

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<sup>190</sup> Ibid.

<sup>191</sup> Interview with author, 17.03.2017.

<sup>192</sup> *Rossiskaiia gazeta*, 28.12.2015, <https://rg.ru/2015/12/29/skazka.html>

<sup>193</sup> Ibid.

<sup>194</sup> RGALI, f. 3267, op. 1, ed.kh. 371.

<sup>195</sup> Ibid, 127.

<sup>196</sup> Ibid, 7-108.

influences from myth and legend. He drew from the Russian version of *Cinderella* and a short story by Mikhail Saltykov-Shchedrin (no relation), as well as some of his own additions. The libretto, therefore, was a compilation of a Japanese adaptation of a Russian play, Russian folk material, and of Shchedrin's imagination.

Musically, Shchedrin claimed that his score was deeply influenced by Tchaikovsky, and even called his opera an 'opéra-féerie' to mimic *The Nutcracker's* subtitle of 'ballet-féerie'.<sup>197</sup> While there are no striking quotations of Tchaikovsky in Shchedrin's opera, and no particular harmonic affinity, there is a structural similarity. Shchedrin built the opera of short, melodically appealing, distinctive scenes. Like the *Nutcracker*, *A Christmas Tale* changes tableaux rapidly and dramatically, evoking distinctive sonic worlds for each of the wildly varied scenes of the fairy tale; this is the most obvious similarity between the two works. The opera is structured with arias, ariosos, and choruses which tend to be lyrical with memorable texts and melodies. This, in addition to the influences of Russian folk-music throughout, makes for easy listening; his long-held admiration for the musical as a genre finally seeped into his opera writing (hardly surprising, perhaps, given the first iteration of this project in Japan).<sup>198</sup> Easy listening, however, is not necessarily without musical complexity: Gergiev called the score 'nourishment' for his musicians, 'not at all simple', while several soloists of the Mariinsky Theatre allegedly declined roles they were offered because they considered the parts too difficult.<sup>199</sup> Despite the complexity of performing it, however, *A Christmas Tale* has all of the elements of a crowd-pleaser.

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<sup>197</sup> *Rossiskaiia gazeta*, 28.12.2015, <https://rg.ru/2015/12/29/skazka.html>

<sup>198</sup> Shchedrin became fascinated with musicals after visiting a rehearsal of Leonard Bernstein's *West Side Story* in the 1980s. He then made it a point to see as many Broadway musicals as he could. He said of *Chorusline*, for example, that it was 'great art', and 'a fantastic spectacle. No less than a symphony of Brahms.' See Rodion Shchedrin, 'Opera v dramaticheskome teatre', *Iunost* no. 2 (1982): 86-9.

<sup>199</sup> Televised interviews, *TV Kultura24*, <https://www.vesti.ru/doc.html?id=2703092&cid=7#>. Accessed 28.03.2020.

If the first two elements of Russianist Realism are obvious – a classic subject and melodicism – the third element, political commentary, lurks just below the surface. What at first sounds like a light-hearted holiday spectacular is, in fact, riddled with acrid satire, as well as Shchedrin's own anxieties about modern Russia. The first act is set up in predictable fairy tale fashion: it is New Year's Eve, and an evil stepmother and her two daughters dream of all of the good fortune they may have in the new year while they send the stepdaughter, Zamarashka, out into the frigid, dark forest to gather firewood. Meanwhile, a capricious tsarina decides to host a ball, but in order to do so demands the palace must be filled with violets – and not just any violets, but *Russian* violets. Given that it is at this point December in Russia, there are no live violets to be found, so she offers a sack of gold as a reward to anyone who will bring her fresh violets for the ball. She also declares that the new year will not begin until such an event occurs. Naturally, the evil stepmother hears the announcement and in her greed sends Zamarashka out into a blizzard in search of violets. While searching for violets in the snow, the girl drops from exhaustion into a deep slumber, but to her good fortune, the twelve months (personified as magical beings perched, in this production, atop Christmas trees) appear. They conjure a temporary, localised spring and surround her with violets. So ends the first act.

Several peculiar features even in this act separate it from the ranks of timeless, apolitical fairy tales. The first is the characterisation of the stepmother and stepdaughters. Their opening aria begins with a list of all of the things they plan to buy with the gold they will receive after finding the violets. 'My pokupaem-paem-paem' ('we're going to buy-uy-uy') the aria begins, and names a villa, a football club, and a yacht with a personal chef among their purchases.<sup>200</sup> Of the six performances of this opera I have seen, including the world premiere, this moment has not failed to provoke spontaneous laughter; this is not an innocuous list of what any given

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<sup>200</sup> Rodion Konstantinovich Shchedrin, *Rozhdestvenskaiia skazka: opera-feeriia v dvukh chastiakh (2014-15)*, Study score, Musik unserer Zeit (Mainz: Schott, 2017).

person might do with a new-found pile of cash (and in fact, though he wrote a version of this duet for the Japanese musical, he changed the entire list of goods they hoped to buy for the Russian version).<sup>201</sup> Rather, it is a jab at the New Russians and the oligarchs whose yachts, villas, and football clubs have regularly speckled newspapers and tabloids since the 1990s when this class of citizens emerged. It is an odd, and potentially risky thing for Shchedrin to poke fun at the New Russians, not least because many of them are behind the funding of the Mariinsky Theatre.<sup>202</sup> Personal observation, however, suggests to me that these jokes were lost on the oligarchs (who, more often than not, sit in the Tsar's Box and are fully engaged by their mobile phones), and that it was everyone else who was laughing. Mobile phones aside, however, the very fact that this was being produced in the Mariinsky Theatre under Gergiev softens the criticism itself: such criticism cannot deliver the same thrust while being propped up and supported by its object.<sup>203</sup>

The costuming also adds layers to the interpretation. It is a mix of contemporary, nineteenth-century, and, for lack of a better term, the fantastical fairy tale. The tsarina and her court are dressed in gold, nineteenth-century finery, which looks ludicrous in comparison to all of the characters from Zamarashka's peasant world, who are in contemporary and fairy tale clothes, trainers, bath robes, etc. The eclectic costuming produces two effects. On the one hand, it provides much the same effect of Serebrennikov's Bosco-clad wealthy heroine in *Chaadskii* – it separates in vivid layers the world of the powerful, and the world of the powerless. But on the other, it adds a level of critical distance between the contemporary Russian situation and what occurs on stage: the mercurial tsarina, dressed as someone out of our time, would be much

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<sup>201</sup> RGALI, f. 3267, op. 1, ed.kh. 371: 43.

<sup>202</sup> Oligarchs German Gref and Roman Abramovich, at least, have funded various costs at the Mariinsky Theatre.

<sup>203</sup> One might note that thus it has always been: the same fate befell Bertolt Brecht, when he was hoping to anger the bourgeoisie with *The Threepenny Opera*, but alas, the bourgeoisie like to see themselves made fun of. See Richard Taruskin, *Music in the Early Twentieth Century* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 906-9.

less likely to be taken for a cameo of Russia's current leader (a confusion which might not have been avoided if the tsarina had actually been a man dressed in a black suit, for example). Finally, the remaining set of characters from the magical dimension provide the colourful pageantry expected of Russian folklore.

In Act II, Zamarashka returns with a basket full of Russian violets, which the stepmother and stepsister snatch and rush to the palace. The tsarina, while delighted with the violets, insists on an explanation of how they discovered them in the middle of a Russian winter, and the women are forced to summon Zamarashka. She tells her story, but no one believes her – until, that is, she twists her magic ring that the month of April had given her, and all of the twelve months appear in the court. This action leads to celebration: the New Year can finally start, and in response the entire cast sings an ode to joy and kindness while waving violets in the air. Like the Shakespeare problem plays, however, this opera concludes with a false sense of resolution. It takes only a moment's reflection to recall that this celebration is, perhaps, not something to be endorsed. In fact, a fickle and harmful ruler is still in charge, Zamarashka is still unrewarded and living with her cruel step-relatives, and given that the tsarina achieved her goal, it is unlikely that any of the unpleasant circumstances presented at the beginning will resolve favourably in the long term. Shchedrin's final message that he leaves to the public through his operas, then, is something like the following: there can be moments of personal happiness in life, even if there is no cosmic justice or lasting reform. It is a truly Soviet sentiment, but also, perhaps, a modern Russian one.

Before leaving Shchedrin's repertoire, it is necessary to return to one more surprising chapter in the history of his operatic premieres: the Mariinsky premiere of the only Shchedrin opera that was still absent from the repertoire up until 2020, *Lolita*. As I mentioned in Chapter 3, *Lolita* premiered on the stage of the Mariinsky Theatre on 13 February 2020, five years after the world premiere of *A Christmas Tale*. But why would *Lolita* appear at this moment, and

how does *Lolita* fit with the principles of Russianist Realism? At first glance, it would seem to contradict all of the principles of Russianist Realism that I have suggested, and its appearance would signify a departure from post-Soviet production trends. I believe, however, that my reading of *Lolita* as presented in Chapter 3 provides some evidence to the contrary. Shchedrin's *Lolita* is a parable about the dangers of moral deviation and of capitalism, and the possibility of redemption through divine intervention. Though the music is far less melodic than his operas of the 2010s, the rehabilitation of a famous Russian author into a Putin-style neo-traditionalist moral framework easily serves to justify how the work could have reached the stage in this performance climate. Indeed, the programme from the Mariinsky premiere justified the production in exactly this manner: it outlined the importance of seeing the men's and boys' choruses as human and divine judges, respectively; it also insisted that *Lolita* is redeemed because she is added to the holy chorus, while Humbert is condemned. In the words of the programme, Shchedrin's opera was a part of the Russian tradition, not an aberration from it:

With the accents that Shchedrin placed in his version of *Lolita*, and in the way he chose and compiled the literary material, he becomes an heir of the Russian aesthetic tradition. The focus of his attention is on the most fundamental and important questions of Russian religion, ethics, and morality: sin, guilt, repentance, redemption. And in addition, beauty, which is also treated like an ethical category.<sup>204</sup>

This analysis is exactly how I predicted this work might be justified over a year before its production. With this justification, the Mariinsky completed the Shchedrin canon, and at the time of this writing, every single one of Shchedrin's operas and ballets is in the regular repertoire of the theatre.

In this chapter, I have demonstrated that the national status of opera has risen in the last ten years, concurrently with the expectations of the Ministry of Culture and the Kremlin to be involved in the formation of culture. Opera composers themselves, in response to these pressures and incentives, have settled around certain musical and visual aesthetics which have

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<sup>204</sup> Printed programme from Mariinsky Theatre performance of *Lolita*, 15.02.2020.

begun to form a pattern – Russianist Realism, with Shchedrin as one of its most prominent proponents. It remains to be seen what will become of Russian opera in the decades to come, but as Putin has recently changed the constitution yet again to allow him to remain in power until 2036, I suspect that the conditions that have arisen under his leadership will only encourage this new style to crystallise more formally. Perhaps Russianist Realism will even achieve what Socialist Realism did not – officially defined musical boundaries which will determine what can and cannot be sung on the stages of Russia's theatres.

## Conclusion: The Shchedrin Legacy

At the outset of this thesis, I set out to answer two primary questions: what became of operatic style and culture after Stalin, and how did Shchedrin's work depart from or conform to – or even form – the trends that emerged. I have demonstrated that the culture of opera creation throughout the late Soviet and post-Soviet period was rich and multivalent, far from the monolithic image of dull Socialist Realism that is hinted at in the extant critical literature.<sup>1</sup> In Chapter 1, I argued that the years immediately after Stalin's death represented surprising continuity in operatic policy and priorities with the years preceding. Despite Khrushchev's denunciation of Stalin in the Secret Speech of 1956, the draconian control of the Communist Party over opera houses had a certain inertia that took decades to dispel. This meant that the Stalinist priorities of curating ideologically appropriate, accessible works for the stage were still the guiding doctrines in opera. Even though the consequences for failure in these categories were not as drastic after the death of Stalin as before, the incentives for success for the composers were the same: status, apartments, the possibility of foreign travel, and most importantly, the chance for their operas to be performed on the main stages of the Soviet Union.

Where does this leave Shchedrin? Shchedrin came of age at a moment when operas on Soviet themes were still in high demand, and when it was entirely unclear how much divergence from previous Soviet models would be tolerated. Since *Not Love Alone* was the first opera premiere to fail at the Bolshoi since the death of Stalin, it played a role in setting the precedent for what the limits of permissibility would be in the opera of the new era. The saga of that opera's rise and fall revealed what the new (and continuous) fault lines would be. Without knowing he was doing it, Shchedrin played with fire in questioning the personal and

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<sup>1</sup> See Introduction: The Shchedrin Problem.

emotional viability of Soviet doctrine through his opera. This would not be tolerated. And what of his musical style? *Not Lone Alone* represented a distinct divergence from the other Soviet-themed operas, both of the late Stalin years and of the Khrushchev years. Though often called a folk opera, his serious academic writing, woven between folk themes, breaks the opera free from the predictable, simplistic models of his peers. There was a chance this opera could have marked the beginning of new creativity in the genre, but it was not to be; the doctrinal transgression of the message prevented the musical innovation from being preserved on stage.

What of opera during the Stagnation? As I demonstrated in Chapter 2, while ‘stagnation’ was a misnomer in many areas of society, and probably in the private lives of citizens, the operatic landscape still seems to have been characterised by a sort of ennui, or exhaustion, from decades' worth of artistic battles. It is true that few new operas of note were written and produced in this era (at the Bolshoi, only four were produced from 1970 to the end of the Soviet Union, to be precise). This sluggishness in new production reflects not only ennui, however, but a change in priorities in opera: for the first time since the Revolution, operas on Soviet themes were deprioritised, and recovering the quality of the ‘golden vault’, classic Russian operas, became the goal. In addition, the previously banned modernists were making a comeback. Shostakovich and Prokofiev became the stars of the Soviet opera houses in the 1970s. Both of these trends demonstrate not stagnation, but positive activity, an effort to revive traditions that were at risk of being buried in substandard operas starring tractors and scythes. Once again, however, Shchedrin broke ranks. While his three peers whose operas were all produced in the 1970s continued in the old manner, writing Soviet-themed operas in accessible styles, Shchedrin embraced the revived traditions of the early modernists. Incorporating elements from both the Russian classics and from the modernists, he composed a satirical opera in a complex, inaccessible style, based on a text from the canon of Russian literature – the only opera of its kind written between 1936 and 2005. This time, however, his divergence from the

norm was tolerated, and even celebrated. By the 1970s, experimentation had become possible on the Soviet opera stage.

The story of Soviet opera during Perestroika is that of Russian opera and composers making their way abroad. I chronicle the tantalising international opportunities that became available to composers in the Gorbachev years, and the subsequent emigration of the majority of Russia's prominent composers – including Shchedrin. The 1980s and early 1990s expose a series of fractures in the fabric of reality that confronted composers: fractures in the Soviet system, in the security of their livelihoods, in their understanding of their identities. Those who succeeded in the new post-Soviet marketplace, I argued, were those who quickly adapted to Western capitalist systems despite early mistakes. Shchedrin was just such a person. His savvy allowed him to succeed in the international markets, partly due to his ingenuity in communicating with Western publishers and radio stations as early as the 1970s, a precedent which set him up well for success when the Soviet Union did collapse.

Shchedrin's *Lolita* is an opera that bridges these various fractures. While I would argue that it was not one of his most musically effective works, it is one of great historical interest as a reflection of two of the major innovations and concerns of Perestroika: religion and morality. Shchedrin used this opera to comment on his current historical moment just as he did with his previous two. In *Not Love Alone*, he drew attention to the personal consequences of Soviet dogma; in *Dead Souls*, he mocked the Soviet bureaucracy and the Socialist Realist operas of his peers; in *Lolita*, he added his own solution to how to solve the evolving crisis in morality – through religion.

In the post-Soviet era, I traced the peculiar developments of Kremlin cultural policy, from ignoring the cultural sphere, to funding and encouraging experimentation, to tightening control. In the last ten years, there has been both a significant rise of status in opera nationally, as evidenced by the priority – and staggering amounts of money – given to building opera

houses across Russia. This improvement in status has risen in tandem with increasing control from the central government. Opera composers themselves, in response to these pressures and incentives, have settled around certain musical and visual aesthetics which have begun to form a pattern – Russianist Realism. I argue that Shchedrin has emerged in the modern era as the living composer most celebrated by the Russian government. His operas and ballets are more frequently performed than those of any other living Russian composer, in no small part due to Valery Gergiev’s championing of them, both on tour, and at home at the Mariinsky Theatre. His operas fit the style of Russianist Realism well: in substance, merging classic texts with political satire and music that is melodic and at least potentially memorable; and in production, with stylised costumes that draw on Russian historical dress but remain in the present day. I suggest that perhaps the style that eluded the Soviets for so many decades is at last coming into its own.

This investigation of Shchedrin’s career has provided a more complete account of late Soviet opera than has previously existed. And yet, many questions remain unanswered, and there is bountiful opportunity for further research. First, since Shchedrin was my focus, my research inevitably centred on the cultural capitals where he spent the majority of his career – Moscow and St Petersburg. I touch on other cities, such as Perm, just enough to reveal that there might be very different factors at play in the periphery from those at play in the centre. Intriguing questions arise about Soviet opera practices in the Baltics, Caucasus, Central Asia, and far-flung Russian cities. In addition, I have only scratched the surface of the intricacies of opera production in the Soviet Union. Most studies of opera, including my own, are dominated by questions of composition, adaptation, politics, and reception. But little research has been done on costume making, set design, lighting design, stage managing, the personalities involved in these jobs, and the microcultures that form around them. There remains much to be gleaned from all of these supporting roles in the opera house. By giving these roles their due

attention, I imagine we would take strides toward humanising the opera house, and also toward humanising the Soviet culture-creating process. In discussing humanising the opera house, another neglected aspect of Soviet opera comes to the fore: that of opera as social practice, one that demonstrates complex interactions of competing interests and power structures. While these questions have been addressed in discussions of the symphony and the art song, the opera house as a nexus of meeting, and even in some cases of forging a sort of civil society, has yet to become the focus of scholarly study.<sup>2</sup> In addition, it is worth mentioning that Bullock's investigation of the Soviet concept of *kul'turnost'* as it relates to the art song of the 1930s has strong resonances with the present day: there are numerous continuities between the ways in which the Soviet Union taught its citizens to consume art from the Stalin era and the Putin era, another fascinating topic that begs further investigation but falls beyond the scope of the present study.<sup>3</sup>

Finally, where does this leave Shchedrin? I began by describing how he is positioned in a reductionist way in much of the literature: in general, a compromiser to many Western scholars, a saint to many Soviet scholars, and middle figure to many post-Soviet scholars. These accounts have failed to do justice to the complexity of the life he lived, to his experiences with censorship, to his social and political *savoir faire*, or to the variety and skill of his musical *oeuvre*. In the preceding chapters, I examined each of these elements, demonstrating how narratives of Shchedrin have been simplified, just like narratives of late Soviet times in general (until very recently). I have argued that Shchedrin's past deserves closer and more comprehensive scrutiny, as well as greater empathy. While I have put his past into perspective, questions nevertheless remain about his present and his future.

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<sup>2</sup> See in particular Pauline Fairclough, 'Was Soviet Music Middlebrow? Shostakovich's Fifth Symphony, Socialist Realism, and the Mass Listener in the 1930s', *The Journal of Musicology* 35, no. 3 (2018): 336–67. Philip Ross Bullock, 'The Pushkin Anniversary of 1937 and Russian Art-Song in the Soviet Union', *Slavonica* 13, no. 1 (2007): 39–56.

<sup>3</sup> Bullock, 'The Pushkin Anniversary'.

What is Shchedrin's place in contemporary culture, and how might his place evolve? In the immediate post-Soviet period, Shchedrin's international reputation suffered from lack of connection to the avant-garde set: he was unable to play off the currency of the image of the suffering dissident.<sup>4</sup> But his place as an insider (or at least, not an outsider) which once did him little credit for reputation has now benefited him. Since the early 2000s, and intensifying in Putin's third term, Putin has been on a campaign to rehabilitate the Soviet past, and to rebuild Soviet Russia.<sup>5</sup> Between his comments that the collapse of the Soviet Union was 'the greatest geopolitical catastrophe of the century', his annexation of Crimea, and his subsequent speeches justifying the return of Crimea to the 'home port', he has made the priorities of his presidency clear.<sup>6</sup> Presidential priorities have flooded into art, and manufactured nostalgia can be seen especially clearly in film, where there have been countless attempts to romanticise a carefully curated selection of aspects of Soviet life.<sup>7</sup> In this new climate, where criticising the Soviet regime has once again become taboo, it is once again acceptable to celebrate those heroes who the Soviet regime celebrated. Shchedrin is the perfect crossover figure: he is the only major living composer of the old guard who did not capitalise on falling afoul of the Soviet regime during the Thaw and Stagnation, as did the unofficial composers (Gubaidulina, Denisov, Schnittke). Even though Schmelz has shown that none of those composers was exactly persecuted, and that 'dissident' would have been the wrong term to describe them, they did profit from a narrative of resistance that never fit Shchedrin.<sup>8</sup> This accident of categorisation has served Shchedrin well under Putin, who personally congratulated the composer on his

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<sup>4</sup> See Chapter 3.

<sup>5</sup> Boris Noordenbos, 'To Be Continued', in *Post-Soviet Nostalgia: Confronting the Empire's Legacies*, ed. Otto Boele, Boris Noordenbos, and Ksenia Robbe (New York: Routledge, 2020), 135. Birgit Beumers, *Russia New Fin de Siècle* (Bristol: Intellect, 2002), 3.

<sup>6</sup> Noordenbos, 'To Be Continued', 149.

<sup>7</sup> Birgit Beumers, *Nikita Mikhailov: Between Nostalgia and Nationalism* (London, IBTauris & CoLtd, 2005), 101-12. It is interesting to note that the aspects of Soviet life that most frequently appear in film and television in the Putin period are the Great Patriotic War, the Brezhnev years, and occasionally the 1930s, while swaths of Soviet history are overlooked, such as 1917, or the Krushchev or Gorbachev years.

<sup>8</sup> Schmelz, *Such Freedom, If Only Musical: Unofficial Soviet Music During the Thaw* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 18.

eighty-fifth birthday, and released a statement saying, ‘Your creative work, which embodies great traditions of classical music and daring novel endeavours, has become a truly significant factor in Russian and global music, [which is enriched by] the wonderful pieces you composed in a wide variety of genres, styles and trends.’<sup>9</sup> It is not the words that are significant, but the fact that Putin himself took the time to recognise this composer, and to publicise that he was doing so. Shchedrin is a composer of international stature whose successful Soviet past has now become a useful currency in his post-Soviet present. His Soviet connections to the great institutions, the Bolshoi Theatre, the Moscow Conservatory, and artists in whom the Soviet and post-Soviet regimes could take pride, Maya Plisetskaya, Irina Arkhipova, even Mstislav Rostropovich, now serve to promote his legitimacy rather than detract from it. Even his role as chairman of the Union of Composers of the RSFRSR and his Lenin Prize contribute to the glow of his Soviet halo, to the idea that he is a saint from the Soviet past now living on in the Russian present.

At the time of this writing, Shchedrin is still composing. He has told me he will not write any more operas, but that as long as he breathes, he will compose.<sup>10</sup> His history is still unfolding, and what his legacy will become remains a mystery. What is certain, however, is that as long as he continues to compose for the Mariinsky, he will continue to be a composer whose works are intertwined with his complex political surroundings. His post-Soviet works will require analysis that takes into account the rise of this institution as the dominant Russian artistic powerhouse, their inseparable links to the resurgence of Soviet nostalgia, and the president who enabled both of those phenomena. But I also suspect that this composer, who skilfully navigated the fickle politics of reputation in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, will emerge in the history as an artist whose career and compositions left a significant imprint

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<sup>9</sup> ‘Meeting With Shchedrin’, the Kremlin, Moscow, 16.12.2017, <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/56396>. Accessed 19.10.2020.

<sup>10</sup> Interview with author, 4 April 2020.

on Russian musical culture, and whose life embodies the complexities and contradictions of the nation he calls home.

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Shostakovich, Dmitrii Dmitrievich. *Nos: opera v trekh deistviakh, desiati kartinakh*. Moscow: Izdatel'stvo Muzyka, 1981.

## Primary archival sources: RGALI (Russian State Archive of Literature and Arts)

Note: for most files, I have noted the file reference number, and transliterated the Russian file name. For a few files, I have the file reference number and a description of the contents, but do not have the Russian file name.

**Fond 648: The Bolshoi Theatre**  
**'Gosudarstvennyi akademicheskii Bol'shoi teatr SSSR (GABT)**  
**(Moskva: 1776-po nastoiashchee vremia)'**

RGALI, f. 648, op. 11, ed.kh. 6: This file includes letters from the Ministry of Culture relating to the operation of the theatre, 09.02.1961-11.11.1961.

RGALI, f. 648, op. 11, ed.kh. 11: '*Stenogramma obsuzhdeniia general'naia repetitsiia baleta R.K. Shchedrina "Ne tol'ko liubov"*' [Note: this is miscategorised in the archives as a ballet rather than what it actually is – an opera.]

RGALI, f. 648, o. 11, ed.kh. 30: These are documents about the work of the ballet company, 10.02.1962-26.04.1962.

RGALI, f. 648, op. 11, ed.kh. 39: These are congratulatory letters to Boris Pokrovsky for his birthday.

RGALI, f. 648, op. 11, ed.kh. 72: '*Stenogramma zasedaniia khudozhestvennogo soveta – "Oktiabr"*'

RGALI, f. 648, op. 11, ed.kh. 113: This file includes notes about television and radio productions in 1965.

RGALI, f. 648, o. 11, ed.kh. 290: '*Stenogramma proizvodstvennogo sobraniia kollektiva opery po obsuzhdeniiu doklada Cherniakova "Vopros o tvorcheskoi i proizvodstvennoi distsipline"*'

RGALI, f. 648, o. 11, ed.kh. 355: This file comprises the financial records of the Bolshoi Theatre for 1961.

RGALI, f. 648, o. 11, ed.kh. 359: This file comprises budgets and repertoire plans for new productions. It is dated 30.01.1962.

RGALI, f. 648, op. 11, ed.kh. 399: Handwritten notes about discussions of the opera *Sud'ba cheloveka* by Dzerzhinsky, dated October 1961.

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RGALI, f. 648, o. 11, e.kh. 401a: '*Otvety zritelei po ankete gazety Sovetskii artist o postanovke opery R.K. Shchedrina "Ne tol'ko liubov"*'

RGALI, f. 648, o. 12, ed.kh. 12: '*Stenogramma zasedaniia khudozhestvennogo soveta po obsuzhdeniiu na sezon 1966-1967*'

RGALI, f. 648, o. 12, ed.kh. 73a: '*Prikazy ministerstva kul'tury SSSR otnosiashchiesia k deiatel'nosti teatra 1968-1969 chast' 1*'

RGALI, f. 648, op. 12, ed.kh. 94: '*Postanovleniia i rasprozheniia Soveta ministrov SSR otnosiashchiesia k deiatel'nosti teatra*'

RGALI, f. 648, op. 12, ed.kh 279: *‘Svedeniia o repertuare GABT i KDS 1968-1969’*

RGALI, f. 648, op. 12, ed.kh 291: *‘Repertuarnyi plan na sezon 1970-1971’*

RGALI, f. 648, op. 19, ed.kh 7: *‘Stenogramma zasedaniia khudozhestvennogo soveta po obsuzhdeniiu baleta Shchedrina Chaika’*

RGALI, f. 648, o. 19, ed.kh. 209: *‘Buklet po spektakliu “Mertvye dushi”’*

RGALI, f. 648, op. 19, ed.kh 210: *‘Buklet po Oktiabr’*

RGALI, f. 648, o. 11, e.kh. 216: *‘Snezhnaia koroleva – stsenarnyi plan’*

RGALI, f. 648, op. 19, ed.kh 327: This file comprises repertoire statistics from the Bolshoi Theatre in 1973-1974.

RGALI, f. 648, op. 19, ed.kh 328: This file comprises repertoire statistics from the Bolshoi Theatre in 1974-1975.

RGALI, f. 648, op. 19, ed.kh 329: This file comprises repertoire statistics from the Bolshoi Theatre in 1975-1976.

RGALI, f. 648, op. 19, ed.kh 332: This file comprises repertoire statistics from the Bolshoi Theatre in 1976-1977.

RGALI, f. 648, op. 19, ed.kh 334: This file comprises repertoire statistics from the Bolshoi Theatre in 1977-1978.

RGALI f. 648, o. 19, ed.kh 339: This file includes repertoire statistics from the Bolshoi Theatre in 1978-1979.

RGALI, f. 648, o. 19, ed.kh. 344: This file comprises repertoire statistics from the Bolshoi Theatre in 1979-1980.

RGALI, f. 648, o. 19, ed.kh. 351: This file comprises repertoire statistics from the Bolshoi Theatre in 1980-1981.

RGALI, f. 648, o. 19, ed.kh. 356: *‘Plan raboty teatra na 1981-1985’*

RGALI, f. 648, o. 19, ed.kh. 363: This file comprises repertoire statistics from the Bolshoi Theatre in 1982-1983.

RGALI, f. 648, o. 19, ed.kh. 373: This file comprises repertoire statistics from the Bolshoi Theatre in 1983-1985.

RGALI, f. 648, o. 19, ed.kh. 530: *‘Kontrol’naia kniga po spektakliu “Zori zdes’ tikhie”’*

RGALI, f. 648, o. 19, ed.kh. 531: *‘Kontrol’naia kniga po spektakliu “Ivan Susanin”’*

RGALI, f. 648, o. 19, ed.kh. 585: *‘Kontrol’naia kniga po spektakliu “Mertvye dushi”’*

RGALI, f. 648, o. 19, ed.kh. 750: *‘Mertvye dushi, pasport spektaklia’*

RGALI, f. 648, o. 27, ed.kh. 72: *‘Stenogramma zasedaniia khudozhestvennogo soveta po obsuzhdeniiu itogov raboty teatra za sezon 1972-1973 i plan raboty na 1973-1974’*

RGALI, f. 648, o. 27, ed.kh. 73: *‘Eksplikatsii opery S.S. Prokof’eva “Igrok”’*

RGALI, f. 648, o. 27, ed.kh. 96: *‘Stenogramma zasedaniia khudozhestvennogo soveta Bolsh’ogo teatra Soiuzs SSR i Kremlevskogo dvortsa s”ezdov – 1973-1974, 1974-1975’*

RGALI, f. 648, o. 27, ed.kh. 118: *‘to zhe general’noi repetitsii opery K.V. Molchanova “Zori zdes’ tikhie”’*

RGALI, f. 648, o. 27, ed.kh. 148: *‘Stenogramma zasedaniia opernoi sektiis khudozhestvennogo soveta po obsuzhdeniiu opery R.K. Shchedrina “Mertvye dushi”’*

RGALI, f. 648, o. 27, ed.kh. 151: *‘Stenogramma zasedaniia opernoi sektiis khudozhestvennogo soveta po obsuzhdeniiu opery OV...’*

RGALI, f. 648, o. 27, ed.kh. 153: *‘to zhe opery E.L. Lazareva “Leniniana”’*

RGALI, f. 648, o. 27, ed.kh. 181: *‘Stenogramma obshchego sobraniia kollektiva teatra i kremlevskogo dvortsa... 1976/77 – i zadach kollektiva po podgotovke k prazdnovaniiu 60-letia velikoi Oktiabr’skoi sotsialisticheskoi revoliutsii’*

## **Fond 2329: Ministry of Culture of the USSR** ***‘Ministerstvo kul’fury SSSR (Moskva, 1953-1992)’***

RGALI, f. 2329, o. 3, ed.kh. 870: *‘Pis’mo v Sovet ministrov RSFSR Furtseyv E.A.’*

RGALI, f. 2329, o. 3, ed.kh. 876: These are documents and letters from the Ministry of Culture about the development of Soviet opera, some signed by Ekaterina Furtseva.

RGALI, f. 2329, o. 3, ed.kh. 927: *‘Pis’ma o muzykal’nykh uchrezhdenii’*

RGALI, f. 2329, o. 3, ed.kh. 1186: *‘Spravka o tvorcheskoi deiatel’nosti Soiuzs kompozitorov SSSR 1965’*

RGALI, f. 2329, o. 3, ed.kh. 1212: *‘Repertuar teatrov opery i baletov na 1962’*

RGALI, f. 2329, o. 3, ed.kh. 1215: *‘Plan tvorcheskikh zakazov, 1962’*

RGALI, f. 2329, o. 3, ed.kh. 1217: *‘Libretto opery Klary Katsman “Poluvod’e”’*

RGALI, f. 2329, o. 22, ed.kh. 1421: *‘Dokumenty o tvorcheskoi deiatel’nosti teatrov opery i baleta Moskvy 1971’*

RGALI, f. 2329, o. 22, ed.kh. 1517: *‘Dogovory i perepiska s kompozitorom KV Molchanovym o rabote “Zori zdes’ tikhie”’*

RGALI, f. 2329, o. 22, ed.kh. 1635: *‘Dokumenty o tvorcheskoi deiatel’nosti teatrov opery i baleta Moskvy, 1973’*

RGALI, f. 2329, o. 22, ed.kh. 1636: *‘Dokumenty o tvorcheskoi deiatel’nosti teatrov opery i baleta Moskvy, 1973’:*

RGALI, f. 2329, o. 22, ed.kh. 1637: *‘Dokumenty o tvorcheskoi deiatel’nosti teatrov opery i baleta Moskvy, 1973’*

RGALI, f. 2329, o. 22, ed.kh. 1698: *‘Perepiska s teatrami, avtorami... 2 ianv – 12 apr 1974’*

RGALI, f. 2329 o. 22, ed.kh. 1708: *‘Stenogramma zasedaniia kollegii Ministerstva kul’tury SSSR o tvorcheskoi deiatel’nosti GABT td 1974’*

RGALI, f. 2329, o. 22, ed.kh. 1714. *‘Dokumenty o tvorcheskoi deiatel’nosti teatrov opery i baleta strany, 1974’*

RGALI, f. 2329, o. 22, ed.kh. 1715. *‘Dokumenty o tvorcheskoi deiatel’nosti teatrov opery i baleta strany, 1974’*

RGALI, f. 2329, o. 22, ed.kh. 1716. *‘Dokumenty o tvorcheskoi deiatel’nosti teatrov opery i baleta strany, 1974’*

RGALI, f. 2329, o. 23, ed.kh. 273: *‘Dokladnye zapiski rukovodstvu Ministersta kul’tury SSSR, perepiska s glavnym upravleniem kul’tury... 1974-1975’*

RGALI, f. 2329 o. 23, ed.kh. 352: *‘Perepiska s kompozitorami o sozdanii novykh muzykal’nykh proizvedenii’*

RGALI, f. 2329 o. 23, ed.kh. 366: *‘Plan novykh postanovok v muzykal’nykh teatrakh na 1975’*

RGALI, f. 2329, o. 23, ed.kh. 367: *‘Spravka o repertuare teatrov strany za 1971-1975’*

RGALI, f. 2329 o. 23, ed.kh. 371: *‘Dokumenty o tvorcheskoi deiatel’nosti teatrov opery i baleta Moskvy, 1975’*

RGALI, f. 2329 o. 23, ed.kh. 509: *‘Dokumenty o tvorcheskoi deiatel’nosti teatrov opery i baleta Moskvy, 1976’*

RGALI, f. 2329 o. 23, ed.kh. 510: *‘Dokumenty o tvorcheskoi deiatel’nosti teatrov opery i baleta Moskvy, 1976’*

RGALI, f. 2329, o. 23, ed.kh. 529: *'Perepiska s organizatsii Moskontsert'*

RGALI, f. 2329, o. 23, ed.kh. 661: *'Dokumenty o tvorcheskoi deiatel'nosti teatrov opery i balety Moskvyy, 1977'*

RGALI, f. 2329, o. 23, ed.kh. 655: *'Perepiska s teatrami o postanovke novykh muzykal'nykh proizvedenii'*

RGALI, f. 2329 o. 23, ed.kh. 788: *'Dokumenty o tvorcheskoi deiatel'nosti teatrov opery i baleta Moskvyy, 1978'*

RGALI, f. 2329 o. 23, ed.kh. 967: *'Dokumenty o tvorcheskoi deiatel'nosti muzykal'nykh teatrov Moskvyy 1980'*

**Fond 970: Union of Theatre Workers of the Russian Federation  
'Vserossiiskoe teatral'noe obshchestvo (VTO) (Moskva, 1919-po  
nastoiashchee vremia)'**

RGALI, f. 970, o. 22, ed.kh. 2782: *'Khudozhniki: Sapunov K.M., Simov V.A., Sollogub [A.I.], Tatalin, Tyshler A.G., Favrovskii V.A., Fedorovskii F.F. Chast' I'*

RGALI, f. 970, o. 22, ed.kh. 2783: *'Khudozhniki: Sapunov K.M., Simov V.A., Sollogub [A.N.], Tatlin, Tyshler A.G., Favrovskii V.A., Fedorovskii F.F. Chast' II'*

**Fond 1929: Sergei Prokofiev  
'Prokof'ev Sergei Sergeevich'**

RGALI, f. 1929, o. 3, ed.kh. 393: *'Pis'ma M.A. Prokof'evoi: Pis'ma Ansimovu Georgiiu Pavlovichu s prilozheniem pis'ma dlia peredachi Ia. Brozhevskoi'*

**Fond 2577: Lilia Brik and Vasili Katanian  
'Brik Lili Iur'evna (1891-1978) – perevodchitsa, ee muzh Katanian  
Vasili Abgarovich (1902-1980) – literaturoved'**

RGALI, f. 2577, o. 1, ed.kh. 99: *'Pis'ma L.Iu.Brik. Telegramma A.G. Tyshleru'*

RGALI, f. 2577, o. 1, ed.kh. 100: *'Pis'mo L.Iu.Brik. Fadeevu Aleksandru Aleksandrovichu'*

RGALI, f. 2577, o. 1, ed.kh. 101: *'Pis'mo L.Iu.Brik. Felini F.'*

RGALI, f. 2577, o. 1, ed.kh. 103: *'Pis'mo Lili Brik. Iangfel'btu Beshtu, 28.06.1977'*

RGALI, f. 2577, o. 1, ed.kh. 521: *'Pis'ma L.Iu.Brik. Pis'ma F. Tyshler s perepiskami A.G. Tyshlera'*

RGALI, f. 2577, o. 1, ed.kh. 786: 'Tetradi s chernovikami vospominanii o V.V. Maiakovskom i N.K. Cherkasove, zapisiami dlia pamiati i. dr.'

RGALI, f. 2577, o. 1, ed.kh. 777: 'Tetradi s dnevnikovymi zapisiami dlia pamiati, nabroskami tvorcheskogo kharaktera i dr. (1959-1961)'

RGALI, f. 2577, o. 1, ed.kh. 839: 'Pis'ma V.A. Kataniana. Pis'ma R.K. Shchedrinu.'

RGALI, f. 2577, o. 1, ed.kh. 1425: 'Pis'mo A.G. Tyshlera E. Triole i L. Aragonu'

**Fond 3018: Robert Fal'k**  
**'Fal'k Robert Rafailovich (1886-1958)'**

RGALI, f. 3018, o. 2, ed.kh. 178: This is a photograph of Aleksandr Tyshler in his studio.

**Fond 3267: Rodion Shchedrin**  
**'Shchedrin Rodion Konstantinovich (r. 1932) – kompozitor'**

RGALI, f. 3267, o. 1, ed.kh. 1: This is a handwritten version of the score of *Ne tol'ko liubov*.

RGALI, f. 3267, o. 1, ed.kh. 2: This is a handwritten version of the score of *Ne tol'ko liubov*, neatly written in pen.

RGALI, f. 3267, o. 1, ed.kh. 3: This is a handwritten version of the score of *Ne tol'ko liubov*. Neatly written in pen, some notes in pencil in the margins.

RGALI, f. 3267, o. 1, ed.kh. 4: This is a handwritten version of Act 1 of the score of *Ne tol'ko liubov*. Neatly written in pen, some pencil notes.

RGALI, f. 3267, o. 1, ed.kh. 6: This is a handwritten version of Act 3 of the score of *Ne tol'ko liubov*. Neatly written in pen, some pencil notes.

RGALI, f. 3267, o. 1, ed.kh. 7: This is a handwritten version of an early draft of *Ne tol'ko liubov*. Written in very messy pencil.

RGALI, f. 3267, o. 1, ed.kh. 8: "'Mertvye dushi" – I deistviia, klavir'

RGALI, f. 3267 o. 1, ed.kh. 11: "'Mertvye dushi"- I deistviia, partitura, 180 l.' Note: this appears to be the final hand-written version before it went to print.

RGALI, f. 3267 o. 1, ed.kh. 14: "'Mertvye dushi"'. Note: this is a photocopied version of the hand-written score.

RGALI, f. 3267 o. 1, ed.kh. 15: This is a hand-written draft of the score of *Mertvye dushi*. It includes much of the material that does make it into the final draft, but also lots of material and loose-leaf sketches that do not.

RGALI, f. 3267 o. 1 ed.kh. 16: This is a hand-written draft of the score of *Mertvye dushi*. It includes 169 pages of manuscript paper covered with sketches of musical material.

RGALI, f. 3267, o. 1, ed.kh. 17: This is another draft of sections of the score of *Mertvye dushi*. It includes one spiral-bound notebook of manuscript paper (only twenty-six pages are full), and it includes his hand-written text for the scene called 'Plach'.

RGALI, f. 3267, o. 1, ed.kh. 18: “*Nina i dvenadtsat' mesetsev*” *deistvie I, klavir*’

RGALI, f. 3267, o. 1, ed.kh. 25: This is a handwritten draft of the score of *Lolita*.

RGALI, f. 3267 o. 1, ed.kh. 265: “*Mertvye dushi*” *libretto*’

RGALI, f. 3267 o. 1, ed.kh. 266: “*Mertvye dushi*” – *aftograf, vyrezki iz pechatnogo teksta, nakleennye na bumagu*’

RGALI, f. 3267, o. 1, ed.kh. 276: ‘*Zapisnye knizhki s adresami, telefonami, zapisiami na pamiat*’

RGALI, f. 3267, op. 1, ed.kh. 345: ‘*Perepiska s izdatel'stvami “Muzgiz”, “Lediuk”, “Shirmer”, “VAAPom”, ... 1951-1989*’

RGALI f. 3267, o. 1, ed.kh. 371: ‘*T. Fudzita. “Nina i dvenadtsat' mesiatsev” Libretto i stsenarnyi plan miuzikla RK Shchedrina*’

RGALI, f. 3276, o. 1, ed.kh. 377: ‘*Neustanovlenniy avtor. “R.K. Shchedrin”, stat'ia dlia reklamnogo bukleta. Prilozheno soprovoditel'noe pis'mo D. Romadinovoi ot 26 marta 1974*’

RGALI, f. 3267 o. 1 ed.kh. 378. ‘*Skorodumov “PS” k opere RK Shchedrina “Mertvye dushi” dlia trekh solistov*’

RGALI, f. 3267 o. 1 ed.kh. 380. ‘*Al'bom, posviashchennyi 50-letiiu R.K. Shchedrina*’

RGALI, f. 3267, o. 1 ed.kh. 404: ‘*Priglasitel'nye bilety Bol'shogo teatra, muzei izobratel'nykh isrustv...*’

RGALI, f. 3267, o. 2, ed.kh. 21: ‘*Dzhoakino Rossini, IS Bach, teksty radioperedach 1982*’

RGALI, f. 3267, o. 2, ed.kh. 31: ‘*Tetradi s chernovymi zametkami ob opere D.D. Shostakovicha “Katerina Izmailova”, nabroskami stsenariia opery po rasskazu N.S. Leskova “Nesmertel'nyi Golovan”*’

RGALI, f. 3267, o. 2 ed.kh. 32: ‘*Tetradi s chernovymi variantami stsenariia i libretto opery “Mertvye dushi”*’

- RGALI, f. 3267, o. 2 ed.kh. 34: '*R.K. Shchedrin. Bloknot s zapisiami dnevnikovogo kharaktera. Chernovik pis'ma M.L. Rostropovichu.*'
- RGALI, f. 3267, o. 2, ed.kh. 36: This file comprises seven separate notebooks all with notes on the libretto of *Lolita*, ideas, and musical sketches.
- RGALI, f. 3267, o. 2 ed.kh. 37: '*Tetrad' s dnevnikovymi zapisiami i zametkami o I. Babadzhaniane, Sol. Volkove, N. Lezhe, P. Picasso, N. Razmene, M. Chagal i dr.*'
- RGALI, f. 3267, o. 2, ed.kh. 80: '*Pis'mo ot Shchedrina Gorbachevu Mikhailu Sergeevichu*'
- RGALI, f. 3267, o. 2, ed.kh. 195: These are letters from Rodion Shchedrin to Mstislav Rostropovich.
- RGALI, f. 3267, o. 2, ed.kh. 209: '*Pis'ma R.K. Shchedrina Solzhenitsynu Aleksandru Isaevichu*'
- RGALI, f. 3267, o. 2, ed.kh. 762 : '*Pis'ma R.K. Shchedrinu Snitkovskogo Semena Isaakovicha*'
- RGALI, f. 3267, o. 2, ed.kh. 966: '*Telegrammy zarubezhnykh muzykal'nykh teatrov*'
- RGALI, f. 3267, o. 2, ed.kh. 1055: This file comprises programmes from the production of *Lolita* in Perm' in 2003.
- RGALI, f. 3267, o. 3, ed.kh. 9: '*R.K. Shchedrin. Zametki na poliakh i pomety v tekste knigi V.V. Nabokova "Lolita"*'
- RGALI, f. 3267, o. 3, ed.kh. 2: '*R.K. Shchedrin. "Tvorit' dlia naroda, vo imia kommunizma", "La Scala v Bol'shom", "Velikoe imia – Bernstein" i dr. stat'i i zametki*'
- RGALI, f. 3267, o. 3, ed.kh. 3: '*R.K. Shchedrin. Doklad na Plenumu Soiuza kompozitorov SSSR (1961)*'
- RGALI, f. 3267, o. 3, ed.kh. 11: '*Pis'ma Shchedrina R.K. Brik Lili Iur'evne i Katanianu Vasiliuu 24 maia 1960, 10 iunია 1960*'
- RGALI, f. 3267, o. 3, ed.kh. 13: '*Pis'mo Shchedrina RK Iziumovu Iuriiu Petrovichu*'
- RGALI, f. 3267, o. 3, ed.kh. 15: '*Pis'ma Shchedrina R.K. Rostropovichu Mstislavu Leopoldovichu*'
- RGALI, f. 3267, o. 3, ed.kh. 17: '*Pis'mo Shchedrina R.K. Kharlamovu Mikhailu Averkievichu*'
- RGALI, f. 3267, o. 3, ed.kh. 22: '*Pis'mo Aronova A.S. Shchedrinu R.K. (1965)*'

- RGALI, f. 3267, o. 3, ed.kh. 23: '*Pis'mo Babadzhaniana Arno Shchedrinu R.K. (1965)*'
- RGALI, f. 3267, o. 3, ed.kh. 25: '*Pis'mo Bashkirova Dmitriia Aleksandrovicha Shchedrinu R.K. (1966)*'
- RGALI, f. 3267, o. 3, ed.kh. 28: '*Pis'mo Boiko Rostislava Shchedrinu R.K. (1966)*'
- RGALI, f. 3267, o. 3, ed.kh. 30: '*Pis'mo Brauna Germana Shchedrinu R.K. (1963)*'
- RGALI, f. 3267, o. 3, ed.kh. 44: '*Pis'mo Getsleva Borisa Grigor'evicha Shchedrinu R.K. (1968)*'
- RGALI, f. 3267, o. 3, ed.kh. 48: '*Pis'ma Gusmana Izrailia Borisovicha Shchedrinu R.K. (1969)*'
- RGALI, f. 3267, o. 3, ed.kh. 66: '*Pis'mo Kartera Zhorzha Shchedrinu R.K. (1966)*'
- RGALI, f. 3267, o. 3, ed.kh. 72: '*Pis'mo Kozlova Vladimira Petrovicha Shchedrinu R.K. Prilozheny noty pesni R.K. Shchedrina "Veselyi marsh montazhnikov" na slova V.P. Kotova s darstvennoi nadpis'iu R.K. Shchedrinu (24.03.1961, 1968)*'
- RGALI, f. 3267, o. 3, ed.kh. 75: '*Pis'mo Lezhe Nadi Shchedrinu R.K. (1965)*'
- RGALI, f. 3267, o. 3, ed.kh. 48: '*Pis'mo Gusmana Izrailia Borisovicha Shchedrinu*'
- RGALI, f. 3267, o. 3, ed.kh. 58: '*Pis'mo Zarkhi Shchedrinu*'
- RGALI, f. 3267, o. 3, ed.kh. 95: '*Pis'ma Pavermana Marka Izrailevicha Shchedrinu R.K.*'
- RGALI, f. 3267, o. 3, ed.kh. 96: '*Pis'ma Petrova Andreia Pavlovicha Shchedrinu R.K. (1963-1971)*'
- RGALI, f. 3267, o. 3, ed.kh. 101: '*Pis'mo Polianovskogo Georgiia Aleksandrovicha Shchedrinu R.K. (26.10.1966)*'
- RGALI, f. 3267, o. 3, ed.kh. 104: '*Pis'mo Reinkhol'da Lauma Shchedrinu R.K. (1964)*'
- RGALI, f. 3267, o. 3, ed.kh. 106: '*Pis'mo Rozhdestvenskoi Natal'i Petrovny Shchedrinu R.K. (1968)*'
- RGALI, f. 3267, o. 3, ed.kh. 110: '*Pis'mo Rostropovicha Mstislava Leopoldovicha Shchedrinu R.K. prilozhena perepiska M.L. Rostropovicha s D.V. Nabokovym po povodu avtorskikh prav na roman V.V. Nabokova "Lolita" ot 1993 g.*'
- RGALI, f. 3267, o. 3, ed.kh. 111: '*Pis'ma Salmanova Vadima Nikolaevicha Shchedrinu R.K. (1965)*'

- RGALI, f. 3267, o. 3, ed.kh. 129 ‘*Pis'mo Kharadzhaniana Raffi Shchedrinu R.K.*’
- RGALI, f. 3267, o. 3, ed.kh. 140: ‘*Pis'ma Eliasberga Karla II'icha Shchedrinu R.K. (1963)*’
- RGALI, f. 3267, o. 3, ed.kh. 144: ‘*Pozdravitel'nye pis'ma druzei i znakomykh, prislannye R.K. Shchedrinu (1966-1984)*’
- RGALI, f. 3267, o. 3, ed.kh. 145: ‘*Pis'ma muzykantov, prepodavatelei, aspirantov i studentov muzykal'nykh uchebnykh zavedenii R.K. Shchedrinu (1966-1983)*’
- RGALI, f. 3267, o. 3, ed.kh. 161: ‘*Priglasitel'nye bilety Orgkomiteta IV Mezhdunarodnogo konkursa im. P.I. Chaikovskogo, akademicheskogo simfonicheskogo orkestra Leningradskoi filharmonii im. D.D. Shostakovicha, posol'stvo SShA i dr., prislannye R.K. Shchedrinu s priglasheniami na iubileinye torzhestva (1965-1983)*’
- RGALI, f. 3267, o. 3, ed.kh. 162: ‘*Programmy uchastiia R.K. Shchedrina v mezhdunarodnykh muzykal'nykh simpoziumakh, konkursakh, tematicheskikh programmakh, peregovorakh po voprosam sotrudnichestva i dr. (1966-1988)*’
- RGALI, f. 3267, o. 3, ed.kh. 163: ‘*Materialy Mezhdunarodnogo konkursa pianistov v Parizhe im. Magdy Tagliaferro: otchet R.K. Shchedrina o konkurse, spisok uchastnikov, programmy, zamechaniia R.K. Shchedrina ob ispolniteliakh i dr.*’
- RGALI, f. 3267, o. 3, ed.kh. 164: ‘*Programmy kontsertov s ispolneniem proizvedenii L. Iasnovoii. Klass dotsenta R.K. Shchedrina (1969)*’
- RGALI, f. 3267, o. 3, ed.kh. 175: ‘*Programmy kontsertov Vsesoiuznogo Doma kompozitorov, Malogo i Bol'shogo zalov Moskovskoi konservatorii i dr. s ispolneniem proizvedenii R.K. Shchedrina (1968-1969)*’
- RGALI, f. 3267, o. 3, ed.kh. 203: ‘*N. Bolin, “Madzhorette”. P'esa dlia fortepiano*’
- RGALI, f. 3267, o. 3, ed.kh. 204: ‘*L.Iu. Brik “Pervaia liubov”*’. – *Material dlia baletnogo libretto. (1950s)*’
- RGALI, f. 3267, o. 3, ed.kh. 146 : ‘*Pis'ma slushatelei Shchedrinu, 1973-1988*’
- RGALI, f. 3267, o. 3, ed.kh. 156: ‘*Al'bom s programmami teatral'nykh postanovok s muzykoi R.K. Shchedrina, stat'i i zametki o nikh (vyrezki iz gazet i zhurnalov). Prilozheny kommentarii K.I. Shchedrinoi. (1954-1966)*’
- RGALI, f. 3267, o. 3, ed.kh. 160: ‘*Pis'ma Leningradskogo teatra opery i baleta im. S.M. Kirova, Komissii pri sovete ministrov SSSR po kinematografii, izdatel'stva “Muzyka” i dr. R.K. Shchedrinu s predlozheniami ob izdanii i postanovkakh ego proizvedenii, uchastii v muzykal'nykh festivaliakh, aftorskikh kontsertov i dr. (1963-1991)*’

RGALI, f. 3267, o. 3, ed.kh. 158 : *‘Materialy raboty R.K. Shchedrina v SK RSFSR: vypiski iz protokola sobraniia sekretariata SSK o sostave delegatsii kompozitorov na konferentsiiu po razoruzheniiu postanovlenie Soveta ministrov SSSR po uluchsheniiu oplaty tvorcheskogo truda kompozitorov, prikaz Ministra kul’tury SSSR o spiske lits, priglashennykh na prem’ery spektaklei i dr. R.K. Shchedrin – chlen delegatsii, sekretar’ SSK i predsedatel’ SK RSFSR. (1962-1983)’*

RGALI, f. 3267, o. 3, ed.kh. 161 : *‘Priglasitel’nye bilety Shchedrinu’*

RGALI, f. 3267, o. 3, ed.kh. 171: *‘Programmy kontsertov Moskovskoi konservatorii, Smotra tvorchestva kompozitorov Moskvy, Saratovskoi i Voronezhskoi filarmonii i dr. s ispolneniem proizvedenii R.K. Shchedrina (1954-1959)’*

RGALI, f. 3267, o. 3, ed.kh. 172: *‘Afishi kontsertov Bol’shogo zala Moskovskogo konservatorii, Kolonnogo zala Doma Soiuzov, Estradnogo teatra, Gor’kovskoi, Irkutskoi, Minskoi filarmonii i dr. s ispolneniem proizvedenii R.K. Shchedrina (1954-1971)’*

RGALI, f. 3267, o. 3, ed.kh. 180: *‘Programmy kontsertov Vsesoiuznogo doma kompozitorov i t.d. s ispolneniem proizvedenii Shchedrina’*

RGALI, f. 3267, o. 3, ed.kh. 173: *‘Programmy kontsertov Vserossiiskogo khorovogo Obshchestva, Tsentral’nogo Doma kompozitorov, Kremlevskogo Dvortsia c“ezdov i dr. s ispolneniem proizvedenii R.K. Shchedrina (1960-1967)’*

RGALI, f. 3267, o. 3, ed.kh. 174: *‘Svodnye afishi Bol’shogo teatra s postanovkoi oper i baletov R.K. Shchedrina (1967-1987)’*

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