SHOSTAKOVICH'S USE OF SATIRE IN *ANTI-FORMALIST RAYOK* WITH A FOCUS ON
THE MUSIC OF THE CHARACTER D.T. TROIKIN

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Dissertation Prepared for the Degree of

DOCTOR OF MUSICAL ARTS

UNIVERSITY OF NORTH TEXAS

August 2014

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In January 1989, a much-rumored work by Dmitri Shostakovich titled Anti-Formalist Rayok received its public premiere. Rayok is a single-act satirical opera/cantata for bass soloist and mixed chorus. Each character represents a prominent Soviet political figure: Joseph Stalin, Andrei Zhdanov, and Dmitri Shepilov. The text of the libretto is either taken directly from actual speeches given by these political figures or follows their idiosyncratic style of public speaking.

Rayok often falls victim to criticism for its lack of musical depth, a point of view that could easily lead one to see it as one of Shostakovich's lesser works. The purpose of this document is to examine the political environment of the Soviet Union in the early twentieth century in order to provide context for Shostakovich's Anti-Formalist Rayok and to show how Shostakovich uses satire in this piece. This dissertation document looks at the broader concepts of Formalism and Socialist Realism, traces how Socialist Realism became the established Soviet cultural aesthetic, and examines specific historical events in the 1940s and 1950s that relate to Rayok. Musical examples are taken from the section of the piece centering around D.T. Troikin. These examples demonstrate how Shostakovich uses Socialist Realist clichés in order to satirize the overly bureaucratized state of Soviet musical aesthetics. This leads to the conclusion that Shostakovich created a paradoxical work of art only posing as kitsch, and that he was not only satirizing the political figures presented in disguise but also the entire Soviet Socialist Realist aesthetic.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapters

1. INTRODUCTION .......................................................................................................................1
   - Significance and State of Research ....................................................................................3
   - Purpose ..........................................................................................................................5

2. FORMALISM, SOCIALIST REALISM, AND ZHDANOVSHCHINA: HISTORICAL AND
   AESTHETICAL CONTEXT ........................................................................................................7
   - Formalism .......................................................................................................................7
   - The Origins of Socialist Realism .....................................................................................10
   - The Socialist Realist Aesthetic .......................................................................................11
   - Zhdanovshchina ............................................................................................................15
   - Shepilov and the Second All-Union Congress of Soviet Composers .........................21

3. THE HUMOR IS IN THE MUSIC: A LOOK INTO THE MUSIC OF THE CHARACTER
   D.T. TROIKIN ....................................................................................................................23

BIBLIOGRAPHY ..........................................................................................................................34
CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

In January 1989, Mstislav Rostropovich gave the first public performance of a much-rumored work by Dmitry Shostakovich titled *Anti-Formalist Rayok*.\(^1\) In this work Shostakovich used every opportunity to include satirical jabs aimed at Soviet political figures and the Soviet state's adoption of an ill-defined and politically-charged musical aesthetic.

In Russian, the term *rayok* is the diminutive form of the word *ray*, which translates to "paradise" or "heaven"; therefore, the literal translation of *rayok* is "little heaven." *Ray* is also a theatrical term meaning “the gods” or “paradise” and refers to the cheap seats near the theater ceiling, which are usually painted with mythical themes.\(^2\) In its diminutive form, *rayok*, the meaning shifts and now refers to a puppet-theater or peepshow.\(^3\)

Shostakovich’s choice of title is also a deliberate reference to a similar composition by Modest Mussorgsky, also named *Rayok*, with which Shostakovich had been familiar since his youth. Shostakovich's *Rayok* shares similarities with Mussorgsky’s; both are short satirical works for voice in which the composer lampoons his musical enemies. The difference in the subject matter between the two pieces reflects the historical differences during the lives of the two composers. Mussorgsky represented the group of free-thinking composers known as the Mighty Handful against the conservative, Germanic-style composers in Russia, whereas Shostakovich's antagonists were the dogmatic conservative spokesmen of Socialist Realism.\(^4\)

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\(^3\) Calum MacDonald, "The Anti-Formalist 'Rayok' - Listeners Start Here!." *Tempo* 173 (June 1990): 27.

\(^4\) Yakubov, 148, 150; MacDonald, 27.
In the preface to Anti-Formalist Rayok, Shostakovich writes from the point of view of its imaginary publishers and gives an account of the fictitious circumstances in which this incomplete work was found in a drawer under a pile of excrement. Shostakovich then includes a fake report written by the imaginary government official who the "publishers" claim found the work. This government official writes that the piece has “…outstanding qualities of both the music and the text, [that] force one to consider that we are dealing with an outstanding work.”\(^5\) Considering where the work was supposedly found, this statement implies Shostakovich's opinion that when one follows the official government guidelines for Socialist Realist music, the end result is ultimately a pile of excrement.\(^6\)

Shostakovich’s Anti-Formalist Rayok is a single-act satirical opera or dramatic cantata for four bass soloists and mixed chorus. Although the four characters can be performed by different singers, Shostakovich states that the roles can be reduced to one bass soloist who has the ability to, “…transform himself and thus perform all four roles,” a concept that early sketches show was Shostakovich’s original idea.\(^7\)

The setting of Shostakovich's Rayok is the middle of a propaganda meeting. The four characters are the Chairman (who serves as the Master of Ceremonies), I.S. Yedinitsyn, A.A. Dvoikin, and D.T. Troikin. Each surname loosely translates to Onesky, Twosky, and Threesky. The initials attributed to Yedinitsyn represent Joseph Stalin, former leader of the Soviet Union. A. A. Dvoikin represents Andrey Alexandrovich Zhdanov, who was in charge of Soviet cultural policy in the 1940s, and Troikin's initials represent the 1950s Secretary of the Party’s Central Committee, Dmitry Trofimovich Shepilov. The identities of the three characters are significant,


\(^6\) MacDonald, 25.

\(^7\) Yakubov, 138.
as the text of the libretto is either taken directly from actual speeches given by these political figures or follows their idiosyncratic style of public speaking.8

Yedinitsyn’s character takes on the ponderous, question-and-answer manner of speaking where the wording of the answer repeats the wording from the question, a rhetorical style often found in the speeches of Stalin. The key points of Dvoikin’s text come directly from Zhdanov’s speeches during his campaign against Formalism in music in 1948. Also, because Zhdanov prided himself on having trained as a singer, Shostakovich begins Dvoikin’s speech by demonstrating his vocal prowess with a number of vocalises. Though the initials given to Troikin's character clearly imply Shepilov, not much is taken from his speeches other than the text used during the opening waltz music. Troikin’s character is actually a hybrid of Shepilov and Zhdanov; a large part of the libretto in this section is taken from speeches by Zhdanov.9 Shostakovich sets Troikin's music to a potpourri of classical-era devices and dances including a waltz, march, recitative, and can-can.

Significance and State of Research

The current state of research on Anti-Formalist Rayok is surprisingly limited. There are at this time only three articles written directly about Rayok: Lev Lebidinsky's "The Origin of Shostakovich's 'Rayok,'" Manashir Yakubov's "Shostakovich's Anti-Formalist Rayok," and Calum MacDonald's "The Anti-Formalist 'Rayok' - Learners Start Here!" The main focus of the first two articles is dating the composition of Rayok and verifying the authorship of the libretto. Lebedinsky's article is an account of how he wrote the entire libretto with Shostakovich in 1957

8 MacDonald, 25; Yakubov, 151-152.
9 Yakubov, 153.
after the Second Congress of Soviet Composers. Yakubov, head of the Shostakovich Family Archive in Moscow, refutes Lebedinsky's timeline and claim of authorship. Yakubov's article aims to shed light on the history of the composition, musical sources, and literary sources for its text in order to argue that Shostakovich was the sole librettist and that Rayok was composed between the late 1940s and the late 1960s. MacDonald, like Lebedinsky and Yakubov, focuses a majority of his article on the origins of Rayok. He also includes a brief examination of the work's preface and a summary of each character with reference to the actual political figure. The style of MacDonald's article is in a manner similar to program notes.

The two most prominent biographies about Shostakovich, Elizabeth Wilson's Shostakovich: A Life Remembered, and Laurel Fay's Shostakovich: A Life, both include a somewhat brief mention of Rayok. They too, however, focus primarily on the disputed matters of date and Lebedinsky's role in the libretto. A large portion of Wilson's section on the Rayok quotes Lebedinsky's article. Fay's writing on the Rayok is even more brief and provides a summary of the composition while maintaining a neutral attitude toward a definitive timeline, conceding the difficulty in dating the work.

The common feature that is missing from all of the above-mentioned resources is an examination of the music of Rayok itself, its relation to the text, and how Shostakovich chooses to portray satire and humor musically. Wilson writes that Rayok, "... deserves interest less for its musical quality than as a social document." While it may never be considered one of his most

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11 Yakubov, 136.
12 MacDonald, 23-30.
13 Wilson, 296-299.
15 Wilson, 296-297.
profound works of art, \textit{Rayok} is far more than what Fay describes as a, "... party skit, a diversion that might have been improvised, expanded, and embellished through many private 'performances' over a long period of time."\textsuperscript{16} Esti Sheinberg's book, \textit{Ironic, Satire, Parody and the Grotesque in the Music of Shostakovich}, while an invaluable source to better understand Shostakovich's general use of satire, fails to even mention \textit{Rayok}.\textsuperscript{17}

Shostakovich was a prodigious composer who utilized his craft as, among other things, a mode of self-expression. Though the exact timeline of its creation is debatable, examinations of the manuscript of \textit{Rayok} reveal that Shostakovich completed a fair copy of the score with hopes of a public performance and publication.\textsuperscript{18} The fact that this is a work that was written and revised over a period of at least ten years—possibly twenty—with the intent of public performance and publication also works contrary to Fay's (and others') view that \textit{Rayok} was created as mere cheap, frivolous entertainment. Shostakovich composed \textit{Rayok} as a personal composition that has thoughtful musical material interrelating with the subject matter and text in a skillful and deliberate manner.

\textbf{Purpose}

The purpose of this document is to provide context regarding the political environment of the 1940s to 1960s as it relates to Shostakovich's \textit{Anti-Formalist Rayok} and to show how Shostakovich uses satire in this piece. This document explores the opposing concepts of Formalism and Socialist Realism, trace how Socialist Realism became the established Soviet cultural policy, and look at specific historical events and how they related to Shostakovich's

\textsuperscript{16} Fay, 165.
\textsuperscript{18} Yakubov, 140.
creation of Rayok. Musical examples are taken from the section centering around D.T. Troikin in order to demonstrate Shostakovich's use of satire.

Shostakovich’s Rayok often falls victim to criticism for its lack of musical depth, a point of view that could easily lead one to see it as one of his lesser works. Through this investigation, one will see that Shostakovich created a paradoxical work of art that only poses as kitsch, and that he not only satirized the political figures represented by his characters, but also the entire Soviet Socialist Realist aesthetic.
CHAPTE.. 2

FORMALISM, SOCIALIST REALISM, AND ZHDANOVSHCHINA:
HISTORICAL AND AESTHETICAL CONTEXT

Formalism

After the devastating effects of the Russian Civil War, Vladimir Lenin and the Soviet state focused their energies on the immediate need for economic recovery and created the New Economic Policy.\(^{19}\) With the implementation of the NEP came a certain laissez-faire attitude regarding artistic policies.\(^{20}\) This time of recovery and artistic freedom allowed for the rise of Formalist theory in literature.

Formalism began in the early twentieth century as a Russian literary criticism movement in which scholars advocated a scientific approach to the study of literature and poetics.\(^{21}\) The roots of early Formalism can be traced back to two separate literary groups that began simultaneously: the Opojaz, also known as the Society for the Study of Poetic Language in what is now St. Petersburg, and the Moscow Linguistic Circle.\(^{22}\) Although both groups advocated a methodical formalistic examination of the aesthetics of literature, their fundamental approaches differed, especially with regard to the importance of linguistics. As the name suggests, the Moscow Linguistic Circle was made up of linguists and language students who used modern

\(^{19}\) The New Economic Policy (NEP) was established in 1921 in order to slacken some of the nationalization of trade and industry by allowing local commerce. The wage system was restored, grain was freely traded, and private ownership of small businesses and factories were allowed. Though this was done to the general distaste of dedicated Communists, it was seen as a necessity in order to help stimulate the local economy during the post WWI recovery. Boris Schwarz, Music and Musical Life in Soviet Russia: 1917-1970 (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, Inc., 1972), 41.


poetry to test their methodological hypotheses. However, the Opojaz was predominately made up of literary historians who turned to linguistics, although less extensively, in order to expand their examination of poetry.23 Because of the two fundamentally differing approaches, no unified consensus of doctrine was realized, making Formalism difficult to define accurately.

Formalism was often unjustly criticized for being “art for art’s sake.” However, Formalism was not a method of creating art but of understanding the language of poetics. Early Formalists attempted to systematize literary scholarship separate from all external circumstances in which literature is created; in other words, they tried to look at poetry apart from the poet’s or reader’s psyche. They attempted to look at the “literariness” of a work, that is, to see the text apart from peripheral disciplines like psychology, sociology, and cultural history. Formalists stated that the difference between literature and non-literature is the mode of presentation and not the subject matter, so they instead focused on the relationship between rhythm and syntax. Therefore, poetic semantics became an integral part of Formalist theory and included a study of the relationship between sound and meaning in poetry.24

The popularity of the Opojaz with Russian philologists and students of literature saw a growth of Formalist and quasi-Formalist studies in the early 1920s. Because the fundamental premise of Formalism involves the separation of text from all historical, sociological, and psychological context, it was in blatant contradiction to the Marxist-Leninist interpretation in which literature is inseparable from ideology. Marxist-Leninist literary criticism states that the literary text's relation to ideology reveals something about its relations to history and therefore is a reflection of the historical and social institution in which it was written. Lenin considered all

23 Ibid.
24 Ibid., 88-89, 171-173.
forms of art subordinate to the written word and insisted on a unified "party-ness" of all literature. This ultimately led to a power struggle over Russian literary scholarship.  

Initially, Formalism was dismissed by Soviet officials as a minor intellectual fad. Its growing popularity, however, presented serious challenges to the Marxist-Leninist beliefs. The mid-1920s therefore saw a crackdown on all cultural affairs wherever there was a contradiction to Marxist-Leninist ideology. This led to severe criticism of all Formalists and Formalist organizations by Soviet officials in 1924-25. It was not enough to criticize Formalism as a flawed literary doctrine. Soviet officials insisted on completely de-legitimizing Formalist beliefs and anyone associated with Formalism, labeling them dangerous reactionaries to the Soviet state. Soviet officials made attacks on Formalists, such as contriving grossly inexact descriptions of their aesthetics and methods. Leon Trotsky argued that the Opojaz reduced the task of literary historians, “…to the counting of recurrent vowels and consonants, of syllables and epithets.” Anatoly Lunacharsky, the Soviet Commissioner responsible for culture, criticized Formalists as participating in "soulless analysis" turning a "heart-rending tale into a mere stylistic exercise," and "...sterile mental acrobatics." One of Lunacharsky’s standard arguments was that, “Formalist criticism… is a form of escapism, a product of the decadent and spiritually sterile ruling class.”

He later wrote:

The only type of art which the modern bourgeoisie can enjoy and understand is non-objective and purely formal art…. In order to meet this need the petty bourgeois intelligentsia has brought forth a brigade of Formalist artists as well as an auxiliary corps of formalistically oriented students of art.

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The Origins of Socialist Realism

Though Lenin and Lunacharsky were social and political revolutionaries, they were traditionalists with regards to the arts. Lenin even stated, "We must preserve the beautiful, take it as a model, use it as starting point, even if it is 'old'. Why must we turn away from the truly beautiful just because it is 'old'? Why must we bow low in front of the new, as if it were God, only because it is 'new'?" It was not until the first Five-Year Plan was coming to an end in April 1932 that an official Party resolution entitled “On the Reconstruction of Literary and Artistic Organization” brought about a complete overhaul in all matters regarding the arts.

The implementation of this Resolution of 1932 dissolved all independent organizations in the arts, including any remnants of the original Formalist groups like the Opojaz, and replaced them with unions of art workers. The resolution officially ended an era of flexibility in the arts and replaced it with regimentation and conformity. All matters of culture were now directly under Stalinist control.

The new creative solution regarding the direction of Soviet aesthetics was to be called Socialist Realism. The term first came into being in a meeting of writers in October 1932. When the question arose of what to call the new Soviet aesthetic that was based on Marxist-Leninist ideology already in discussion in the early 1920s, Stalin stated, “If the artist is going to depict our life correctly, he cannot fail to observe and point out what is leading it towards


29 The First Five-Year Plan implemented a more militant policy in literature that replaced the more lenient NEP. It showed preference toward Communist writers and literature that served the political goals of the Party. Schwarz 57.

30 Schwarz, 109.

31 Taruskin, 94-95; Schwarz, 110.

32 Schwarz, 114.
socialism. So this will be socialist art. It will be socialist realism.”33 Although it would be some
time before it would resolve itself into rigid, bureaucratic dogma,34 it was at the First All-Union
Congress of Soviet Writers in 1934 that Socialist Realism became the official Party artistic
method.35

With the disbanding of all independent organizations and the creation of state-sanctioned
unions in all fields of Soviet society, the Resolution of 1932 established the Union of Soviet
Composers. Those included in the union were composers and musicologists. At the time, the
label "musicologist" included all those who wrote about music, such as theorists, critics,
historians, and other authors on musical subjects. This broad inclusion was an attempt to create
an atmosphere of creative stimulation. The combination, however, did not produce the desired
effect. Composers did not care to take criticism, critics hesitated to criticize established
composers, and less well-known composers felt overlooked. In 1933, the Union acquired its own
journal called Sovetskaya Muzyka (Soviet Music) which became the mouthpiece for cultural
policy as dictated from the Party’s Central Committee.36

The Socialist Realist Aesthetic

While it was not until 1932 that the theory was codified and given a name, the
development of the Soviet Socialist Realist aesthetic came about with the rise of Marxist-
Leninist ideas. Socialist Realist aesthetics were meant to accomplish three goals: art must fulfill

34 Christopher Moore, “Socialist Realism and the Music of the French Popular Front,” The Journal of
Musicology 25, no. 4 (Fall 2008): 478.
35 James, 87.
36 Schwarz, 112-113.
a social function, the function must be to the benefit of the masses, and it must be part of the activity of the Communist Party.

There are three basic principals that define Soviet Socialist Realism: naródnost, klásovnost, and partiinost.\(^{37}\) Naródnost literally translates as “people-ness” and refers to the relationship between the arts and the masses. Under the principle of naródnost, art is not considered genuine unless it is rooted in the life of the people. Advocates for Socialist Realism claimed that a bourgeois society produces an elitist “art for art’s sake,” that is, art intended to be received by artists. Authentic art, however, only has a point if it is accessible to the people. It must have its roots in the broad masses of the workers and ought to combine elements of folk art with progressive ideas. It should use popular subjects and themes crafted by applying artistic techniques of the classics. Advocates of Socialist Realism aimed to bring the arts to the people, underpinned by left-wing messages in order to unite the people.\(^{38}\)

The second principle, klásovnost, translates as “class-ness” or the class characteristics of art. Unlike the initial objective of early Formalists to separate all peripheral disciplines from poetic language, Marxist-Leninist ideology shows that art always bears traces of class interests. Marxist-Leninist principles state that all authentic art reveals an objective reflection of some basic aspects of society of its time. Therefore, all art is class art.\(^{39}\)

Partiinost translates as “party-ness” and refers to the relation of the artist with the Communist Party. Partiinost is not simply the intention of the artist to take a political stance; it is the intention of the artist to create art with a desired political function and specifically dedicate

\(^{37}\) James, x-xi, 1, 13.

\(^{38}\) James., 1, 4-6; Moore, 477.

\(^{39}\) James, 1, 9-11.
his work to the development of socialism. Therefore, one can see that Socialist Realism is the artistic method by which the artist fulfils the Communist Party’s creative expectations.\textsuperscript{40}

Although Socialist Realism was officially established as the chosen aesthetic of the Soviet Union in 1934, its practical application as a music compositional method was slow to come about. Socialist Realism was an artistic method more applicable in literature than in music and was awkward to translate into musical terms.\textsuperscript{41} In the first issue of Sovetskaya Muzyka, the Composer’s Union published the following guidelines in an attempt to help clarify its application:

> The main attention of the Soviet composer must be directed towards the vigorous progressive principles of reality, towards all that is heroic, bright and beautiful. This distinguished the spiritual world of Soviet man and must be embodied in musical images full of beauty and strength. Socialist Realism demands an implacable struggle against folk-negating modernistic directions that are typical of the decay of contemporary bourgeois art, against subservience and servility towards modern bourgeois culture.\textsuperscript{42}

Another state-offered definition, while attempting to provide greater clarity, still lacks any specificity in regards to musical application:

> ‘Realism’ means art that sets out to present a comprehensive reflection and interpretation of life from the point of view of social relations; ‘Socialist’ means in accordance with the policy of the Communist Party. Socialist Realism is therefore based on a direct relationship between the artist and the process of building a new society; it is art coloured by the experience of the working class in its struggle to achieve socialism.\textsuperscript{43}

The problem faced in attempting to translate a fundamentally literary concept into musical terms ultimately led to a number of abstract theories. Musical requirements were frequently taken from analogies with literature and the visual arts. Often, criteria were given as negations of undesirable attributes. Socialist Realist art should, “…present a profound up-to-date

\textsuperscript{40} James, 1, 12-14.

\textsuperscript{41} Moore, 476.


\textsuperscript{43} James, 88.
depiction of reality, but not be confused with photographic art or naturalism.” It must, “…reflect and comment on the burning issues of the day.”

Other clichés include a need for, “profound optimism,” “historical experience of the proletariat,” and, “heroics but not tied to personal interests but of the mass.”

Works of art should be beautiful and truthful. Ironically, the idea of realism and truthfulness meant not a realistic truth, but the truth as approved by the Party. In other words, everything that furthers the causes of Communism is considered beautiful.

As expected, no one seemed sure what Socialist Realism meant with regards to music and whether it was a musical style or artistic method. Even with catalogues of procedures for composition, the negative commentary of the Formalist enemy was more clearly identified than any positive Socialist Realist compositional style. By attempting to define unifying aesthetic norms across all political and artistic areas, Socialist Realism as an aesthetic eventually lost all meaning and simply became a discourse on political correctness in music.

The advocates of Socialist Realism equated any musical modernism or individualism with bourgeois decadence and labeled it Formalism. The term "Formalism" took on a new definition and became a negative catch-phrase for any creative work that government cultural officials felt did not fall under the category of Socialist Realism. "Formalism" was used so widely and indiscriminately that it became difficult to define its precise meaning, especially as it

44 James, 89-90.
47 James, 96.
related to music.\textsuperscript{49} Sergei Prokofiev once joked that, “Formalism is music that people don’t understand at first hearing.”\textsuperscript{50} The only important distinction was between the dogma of Socialist Realism and any aesthetic deviations.\textsuperscript{51}

Socialist Realist music was to be beautiful, heroic, classic, and monumental. What Soviet officials essentially suggested was that music should sound like Russian classical music of the nineteenth century, with the addition of the “popular” element from Russian folk music. Union officials encouraged composers to adopt principals and techniques from Russian classics, especially of the Mighty Handful. The end result was that Soviet music took on a character of safe conservatism and made use of programmatic symphonies, tone poems, oratorio-cantatas, mass songs, and folk-based genres. Nationalism experienced a revival, and conservative composition of inoffensive music became a virtue. Good composers became conventional and conventional compositions became the norm.\textsuperscript{52}

**Zhdanovschina**

During the Second World War, artists and intellectuals received a respite from the rigid implementation of Socialist Realist aesthetics in the 1930s. With the war at hand, strict adherence was no longer one of Stalin’s top priorities. Many intellectuals even felt that government control would become even more relaxed with the coming of peace-time. Unfortunately their hopes were dashed; Stalin quickly reasserted his control as he became increasingly paranoid. The Central Committee of the Communist Party, under the leadership of

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{49} Schwarz, 115; Erlich, “Russian Formalism,” 635.
\item \textsuperscript{51} Erlich, *Russian Formalism: History - Doctrine*, 147.
\item \textsuperscript{52} Fukač, 20; James, 93; Schwarz, 115-116.
\end{itemize}
the ruthless Andrei Zhdanov, began an ideological campaign to reinforce the cultural policies established in the 1930s in all areas of the arts and sciences. Whereas there was indiscriminant government repression of anyone who went against the Communist Party in the Great Purge of the 1930s, the purges faced in post-war 1940s focused directly on the intelligentsia. Thus began the cultural rule of Zhdanov, also known as Zhdanovshchina.\textsuperscript{53}

The first of the cultural purges under Zhdanov began in 1946 with the publishing of three resolutions in three artistic fields. The first resolution dealt with literature, the next on theater, and the third on film. The purpose of these resolutions was to send a clear warning to all Soviet intellectuals about the strict application of the Party’s ideological positions. With the purges of the 1930s still fresh in everyone’s memories, the demoralized intelligentsia was quick to show enthusiastic approval and loyalty to the Party.\textsuperscript{54}

At the time of the 1946 resolutions, the Composers’ Union was ruled by the Moscow-based ORGKOMITET (Organizational Committee), which was established in 1939 to organize and manage the activities of local union chapters. The committee was directed by a number of prominent Soviet composers of the day, including Reinhold Gliere, Aram Khatchaturian, Dmitry Kabalevsky, and Dmitry Shostakovich. In general, the ORGKOMITET was not very effective. Although ideological resolutions were passed, conservatory faculty and students did not pay much attention to them.\textsuperscript{55} One composer commented that, "Occasionally, they met, often without a quorum. It was customary to be either politely silent, or to raise objections, but very tactfully... All must be nice and quiet."\textsuperscript{56}

\textsuperscript{53} Fay, 150; Schwarz, 138, 204-205.
\textsuperscript{54} Schwarz, 205-208.
\textsuperscript{55} Ibid., 208, 222.
\textsuperscript{56} Alexander Werth, \textit{Musical Uproar in Moscow} (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1973), 74; quoted in Schwarz, 209.
On January 5, 1948, Stalin, Zhdanov, and executive members of the Party attended a closed performance of the opera *The Great Friendship* by Vano Muradeli. Muradeli prided himself on his Socialist Realist compositional style. The opera itself was created as a tribute to Stalin’s Georgian homeland, and the subject matter centered on the consolidation of communist power in the northern Caucasus region during the civil war, a subject which should have been well-received by Stalin. However, Stalin was not happy with the political errors presented in Muradeli’s opera. This event caused the Party leadership to question the current state of Soviet musical composition and particularly the effectiveness of the ORGKOMITET.57

After viewing the opera, Zhdanov summoned composers in Moscow to a three-day meeting in which musicians were encouraged to speak openly about the current leadership and guidance of the Union. The overall comments of the meeting showed unanimity on the ineffectiveness of the ORGKOMITET. Some commented on the isolation of the Moscow establishment from the rank and file. Younger composers resented the preeminence of established composers who continued to win prizes and commissions. Many complained about the hero-worship that critics showed towards prominent composers. Composers of light music resented the attention given to "serious" music and argued that it created an iron curtain with the public. They asserted that symphonies were not musical works to be judged as good or bad, but were simply “compositions” that had nothing to do with art.58

Zhdanov utilized the dissent against the current leadership of the Composers’ Union to assert the same kind of pressure he placed on the literary, theater, and film groups.59 After the closing of the January meeting, Zhdanov concluded:

57 Wilson, 207; Fay, 154.
58 Schwarz, 209, 214, 217-218.
59 Ibid., 218.
... even though it is outwardly concealed, a fierce struggle is taking place between two directions in Soviet music. One represents the healthy, progressive aspects in Soviet music, based on the recognition of the immense role of the classical heritage and, in particular, on the traditions of the Russian musical school, on the combination of high idealism and substance in music, its truthfulness and realism, and on the deep, organic connection with the people and their legacy of music and folk song, combined with high professional mastery. The other direction produces formalism alien to Soviet art. Under the banner of illusory innovation, it conveys a rejection of the classical heritage, of national character in music, and of service to the people in order to cater to the purely individualistic experiences of a small clique of aesthetes.60

In the following month, a 1948 Resolution entitled, "On the Opera The Great Friendship by Muradeli," was presented. It was a malicious document that, although the title suggests a rebuke towards Muradeli, was full of baseless attacks on established composers, including Shostakovich. The Resolution included a report on the formalistic trend of composers to write complex, non-programmatic music. Zhdanov went on to say:

…without mincing words, I have to say that a whole series of works by contemporary composers are infiltrated and overloaded to such degree by naturalistic sounds that one is reminded – forgive the inelegant expression – of a piercing road drill, or a musical gas-chamber.

The publication of the 1948 Resolution began a relentless crusade against the most well-known composers of Soviet music.61 Shortly after its publication, the Composers’ Union met, discussed, and endorsed all of the pronouncements of the Resolution. The harshness of the previous resolutions made clear the severity against any intellectual dissent; all Union meetings ended in, “…unanimous expressions of fervent approval and undying loyalty to the Party, often accompanied by a direct letter to Stalin," which often concluded with, “Long live our great leader and teacher, the greatest scholar of our epoch, J.V. Stalin.”62

60 Andrei Zhdanov, Soveshchaniye, 136; quoted in Fay, 156.
61 Schwarz, 214, 220; Wilson, 208-209.
62 Schwarz, 208, 215.
The unquestioning admiration of the ideas represented by Socialist Realism, as expressed by the Central Committee and Zhdanov, came to a climax with the First All-Union Congress of Soviet Composers in April 1948. Although the Composers’ Union was established sixteen years earlier, the All-Union Congress marked the first national convention for Soviet musicians. A new directorate was elected and with the exception of Boris Asafiev, whose position was purely honorary, no composer of consequence was included. Tikhron Khrennikov, a Soviet composer and unabashed supporter of Socialist Realism, was elected as first-secretary and represented the hard line of Zhdanov.63

Speeches filled the conference and continued the campaign against Formalism in music. Prominent composers and any biographers and critics who praised them were censured and forced to publicly repent. Shostakovich was forced to apologize for his bourgeois ways and promised to compose music centered on melody, national ethos, programmatic intonations, and contemporary themes. Afterward Shostakovich avoided all political controversy in his compositions in order to rid himself of the pedantry of Party bureaucrats.64

The 1948 Resolution marked the beginning of a witch-hunt in the field of music that ultimately stifled Soviet composers' creativity. The narrow view of Socialist Realism held by Stalin and Zhdanov was such that it was not enough that art must be understandable by the people, but that all art must be understood by all people. Under the new leadership of the Composers’ Union, all composers were to be closely supervised and their works scrutinized in order to follow the progress of their rehabilitation. With the censure of top composers, lesser artists were expected to fill the vacuum and create great music.65

63 Fay, 161; Schwarz, 215.
64 Schwarz, 223, 244-245; Fay 161.
65 Schwarz, 228, 245.
One of the side effects of the 1948 Resolution was that even decent men were distorted with fear and power. Lesser talents seized the opportunity to make a career for themselves by tearing down their superiors. Shostakovich's friend Yuri Levitin commented on "…those who didn’t miss an opportunity to use the tribune at any audition, discussion, plenum or congress of the Composers’ Union to hurl abuse at their colleagues; they were also more than ready to appear in print with their accusations." Shortly after the Resolution was published, mediocre Soviet composer Marian Koval wrote a long article in three consecutive issues of Sovetskaya Muzyka titled, “The Creative Path of Shostakovich” in which he found evidence of Formalism in every one of Shostakovich’s works. Opportunists rose to power under Zhdanov’s rule, and censured composers were placed in the awkward position of having to audition their works to Union officials for publication and performance. All censured composers needed to have constant evaluation by Union members during every stage of the compositional process. Flora Litvinova, friend of the Shostakovich family, recalls a conversation with Shostakovich:

I remember them berating one of the musical bureaucrats, speaking sarcastically of his complete lack of culture. [Shostakovich said,] 'It's as if they deliberately appoint somebody to be in charge of music who knows absolutely nothing about it.' 'And I supposed they put a musician in charge of the visual arts?' I chipped in. 'No, no, more likely a carpenter or a chemist.'

The 1948 Resolution brought about a renewed offensive against Formalism in the arts. Formalism, now bearing no resemblance to the 1920s literary criticism movement, was now defined as, “…the cult of atonality, dissonance, and disharmony,’ the rejection of melody, and the involvement with the ‘confused, neuro-pathological combinations that transform music into

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66 Schwarz, 206; Wilson, 216.
67 Wilson, 214.
68 Fay, 164;
69 Wilson, 214; Fay, 159, 161-162.
70 Wilson, 202.
cacophony, into a chaotic conglomeration of sounds." Anything contrary to Party beliefs needed to be destroyed. "Formalist" artists were publicly humiliated and dismissed from their positions. Although Zhdanov died six months after the 1948 Resolution, his policies continued until the death of Stalin five years later.

Shepilov and the Second All-Union Congress of Soviet Composers

The Twentieth Party Congress in 1956, as well as the death of Stalin in 1953, brought about a significant change in Soviet policy. Nikita Khrushchev rose to power and began to tear apart the legend of Stalin and put an end to the “cult of personality.” An era of de-Stalinization began; all of Stalin’s policies, including the resolutions implemented by Zhdanov, were to be reassessed.

The Second All-Union Congress of Soviet Composers occurred in April 1957 and was a presentation of new Party guidelines in music. The key address of the Congress was given under the political guidance of the Secretary of the Party’s Central Committee, Dmitry Shepilov. Shepilov’s status in the Party was similar to Zhdanov in 1948, although he commanded less respect. Where Zhdanov engineered the post-war purges and struck fear into the hearts of the intelligentsia, Shepilov attended the Congress not to make cultural policy but to present the conclusions of the Party’s Central Committee.

The Second Congress functioned differently than the First Congress; it did not serve to root out Formalism or any other latent threats to Soviet music. The blame for current problems in

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71 Schwarz, 218-219.
72 Schwarz, 206; Wilson, 215.
73 Schwarz, 298; Wilson, 292.
74 Schwarz, 299-300.
the arts was placed on a bloated bureaucracy and organizational ineffectiveness. Previously censured composers were absolved, and, under new Party guidance, the artistic community saw greater flexibility and tolerance.\textsuperscript{75}

The main purposes of the Second Congress were to attempt to salvage Socialist Realism from the negative effects of Stalinism, return it to its roots in Leninist principles, and reaffirm the leadership of the Communist Party. Many of Shepilov’s comments at the Congress resembled Zhdanov’s guidelines in his 1946 and 1948 Resolutions. The principals of Socialist Realism were indestructible; it was only the method of application that became less rigid.\textsuperscript{76}

Lev Lebedinsky, a close friend of Shostakovich, recalled a specific moment from the Second Congress: “It [the Congress] was as of little significance and just as boring as the previous ones... Wishing to ‘show off’ his [Shepilov’s] ‘scholarship,’ he weighed down his speech with a mountain of great names.”\textsuperscript{77} Shepilov expressed that musicians ought “…to preserve and actively develop the traditions of Glinka and Chaikovsky, Mussorgky and Rimsky-Korsakov, Mozart and Beethoven, Chopin and Smetana,”\textsuperscript{78} blatantly mispronouncing Rimsky-Kosakov’s name and revealing his ignorance of an iconic Russian musical figure. Shostakovich was so delighted when he heard this obvious blunder by a Party official that he created the character D.T. Troikin in order to satirize Shepilov’s boondoggle.\textsuperscript{79}

\textsuperscript{75} Fay, 200.
\textsuperscript{76} Fay, 200; Schwarz, 301-302, 304.
\textsuperscript{77} Lebedinsky, 31.
\textsuperscript{78} Dmitry Shepilov, "Tvorit' dlya blaga i schast'ya naroda," Sovetskaya muzïka no. 5 (1957): 8; quoted in Fay, 201.
\textsuperscript{79} Lebedinsky, 31.
CHAPTER 3

THE HUMOR IS IN THE MUSIC: A LOOK INTO THE MUSIC

OF THE CHARACTER D.T. TROIKIN

Shostakovich’s *Anti-Formalist Rayok* is often dismissed for its lack of musical depth and complexity. The key to understanding this composition's depth is to realize that Shostakovich composed a satirical work that mocks not only individual political figures, but also the bureaucratic aesthetic conventions established with Soviet Socialist Realist doctrine. The humor of *Rayok* does not simply come from cheap gimmicks and gags set to frivolous, kitschy music. Instead, Shostakovich composed layers of wittiness, and most importantly, but most overlooked, the satire can be found within the music itself.

One of the most common methods by which Shostakovich portrays satire musically is with the noticeable presence of inessential musical elements, such as clichés, the banal, and background material, which are emphasized and brought to the musical foreground. Shostakovich exaggerates the deficiencies of certain political figures and the Socialist Realist aesthetic they preached in order to highlight the stupidity of bureaucratizing a musically indefinable aesthetic concept. The fact that *Rayok* does not share the musical complexity of his other masterworks is not only intentional, but essential; Shostakovich deliberately avoids his normal compositional style in order to exaggerate Socialist Realist clichés. ⁸⁰

The character D.T. Troikin is a combination of two political figures: Andrei Zhdanov and Dmitry Shepilov. While many of Troikin’s lines come from speeches by Zhdanov, the basic premise of the character is based on the Shepilov mishap at the Second All-Union Congress of Composers. Shostakovich highlights the mistake of an isolated incident in order to exaggerate

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⁸⁰ Sheinberg, 89.
Shepilov’s faults, make it seem typical, and reveal his musical incompetence. Shepilov is thus turned into a caricature in the role of Troikin.  

After a brief introduction in which Troikin insists that composers write, “…the way the classics did,” the music suddenly becomes a traditional waltz in three-quarter time. Beginning at rehearsal 29, the first four measures of the waltz include the text “Glinka, Tchaikovsky, Rimsky-KorSAkov,” which is then repeated twice more. Each syllable is presented rhythmically in such a way that the mispronounced syllable in “Kor-SA-kov” lands on the strong down beat, giving it greater emphasis. (Figure 3.1)

Figure 3.1

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This musical example shows the listener Shostakovich’s mockery of the person Dmitry Shepilov and his obvious ignorance on the subject of music. Emphasizing Shepilov's lack of understanding is particularly important because it highlights, as most satire does, not only the incompetence of the person of authority but also his hypocrisy. He publically presents himself as a musical expert and lectures composers on how they ought to compose. Shepilov is not presented here as a villain, but as someone he is not: an expert whose acts are noble, good and enlightened. What Shostakovich reveals is Shepilov's incompetence as a musician.82

Shostakovich does not waste any time and immediately begins mocking Socialist Realist clichés in the opening measures of this section. Troikin’s speech begins with what is essentially a double quotation. Beginning in the sixth measure after rehearsal 28, Shostakovich incorporates the popular Russian folk song Kamarinskaya which is also used by Mikhail Glinka in his orchestral fantasy, also titled Kamarinskaya.83 (Figure 3.2) In this manner, Shostakovich fulfills the Socialist Realist requirements of imitating classical composers of the nineteenth century and using popular folk material.

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82 Ibid., 11, 30.
83 Yakubov, 144.
Beginning ten measures before rehearsal 31, Shostakovich emphasizes the discontinuity of the Soviet Party's guidelines; they insisted on originality while condemning individualism and complexity. Troikin sings the text "Our Soviet man is a complex organism," which is repeated four times as a rhetorical way of emphasizing his point. After the fourth iteration, Troikin crescendos in an ascending line up to a sustained D. In contrast to the text being sung, the orchestral accompaniment is far from complex. The tempo quickens to presto and the dynamic level of the accompaniment matches Troikin's forte, while the harmonic structure is a simple V/V to V, V/IV to IV sequence (in other words, dominant to tonic in two different key areas) with a suspended D pedal tone. This progression repeats once more before the final V7 to I punctuates Troikin's final, "Very complex organism!" (Figure 3.3) This clear lack of harmonic
intricacy belies the "complexity" loudly exalted by the singer, especially as the final emphatic, "Very complex organism!" is accompanied by a very simple V7 to I in C major.

Figure 3.3

Another method by which Shostakovich highlights Socialist Realist clichés is in parodying eighteenth century recitative. Beginning at rehearsal 32, he includes a simple piano accompaniment with first inversion chords in the manner of a Mozart *secco* recitative. While the opening music of Troikin is in C major, this recitative section begins suddenly in E major, drawing greater attention to a new musical section with its harmonic abruptness. (Figure 3.4)
The concept of parody in music is to take a familiar musical component from one context and place it in a different, stylistically incongruous context, often in order to poke fun at the expense of the original. Shostakovich, however, included a Mozart-like recitative section not to mock Mozart, but to exaggerate the Socialist Realist cliché of imitating “classic” composers. Troikin’s opening words, “We must try to be classical. You must all compose the way the classics did,” were originally taken from a speech by Zhdanov in which he said, “It would be no bad thing if we had a few more compositions that were like the classics in form, in elegance, in

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84 Sheinberg, 102.
beauty and musicality. If you think this is just imitation, well, there’s nothing to be ashamed of in such imitation.\footnote{Yakubov, 153.}

Though Shostakovich composes a recitative that can easily be recognized as an imitation of Mozart, he does not follow a typical classical harmonic progression; instead, the harmonies move chromatically. As Troikin lists the types of compositions in which the complex Soviet man ought to compose (symphonies, poems, quartets, sonatas, suites and quintets), the harmonic progression begins to ascend chromatically. Beginning in the fifth measure after rehearsal 32 when Troikin is half way through his list, his sense of musical authority begins to falter. Troikin repeats the word “suites” as he begins to get lost in his thoughts. It is at this moment that the line begins to descend chromatically depicting his wavering musical authority and loss of steam. Eventually he meanders into the Russian folk song \textit{Kalinka}.

Shostakovich again fulfills the Socialist Realist requirement for the use of popular folk music beginning in rehearsal 33. This time he uses a quotation of the refrain from \textit{Kalinka}.\footnote{Ibid., 145.} (Figure 3.5)
A common mistake made when criticizing the merits of Rayok is in assuming Shostakovich was merely writing kitschy music by incorporating such a popular folk song as Kalinka.

Shostakovich's choice of Kalinka, one of the most recognizable and commonly used Soviet tunes, was deliberately ironic. In order to exaggerate the Socialist Realist expectation of incorporating folk music, Shostakovich overtly emphasizes a musical cliché. Shostakovich intentionally uses such a widely known folk song, alluding to how it cheapens the quality of the music.

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87 Sheinberg, 94.
In the *Kalinka* section, Shostakovich lets his satirist mask slip. He becomes less detached and makes a more obvious jab at the quality of Socialist Realist music with the couplet:

Glinka, Dzerzhinka, Tishinka, my pets,  
What a shitty lot of poems, quartets and fughettes…

The names “Dzerzhinka” and “Tishinka” are pseudonyms for Soviet composers Ivan Dzerzinksy and Tikhron Khrennikov. Both individuals were recognized for their administrative roles in the Composers Union, and their works were better known for their Socialist Realist potential than for their quality. Shostakovich makes it clear that by including the required elements of Socialist Realism, like *Kalinka*, the end product will be of the same dubious quality as those other Soviet composers.

One of the biggest incongruities between Troikin’s music and text begins at rehearsal 34 and continues until the end of the piece. It is at this point that Troikin urges the members of the Union to be vigilant and not permit the, “…influence of bourgeois ideology to infiltrate our Soviet youth.” Should any of these bourgeois concepts take hold of them, “Then we’ll imprison them, put them inside for years to come. In labour camps, of strictest regime, inside with all of them.”

During all of this mention of sending people to the Gulag, the music is overtly optimistic. The material beginning at rehearsal 35 is a playful romp in the style of a march. Shostakovich includes mass songs (sung by the chorus), another Socialist Realist requirement, in which the chorus echoes Troikin’s music and text. The final musical theme begins at rehearsal 36 and becomes the ultimate climax of *Rayok*. The music is a quotation from Robert Planquette’s opera

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88 MacDonald, 27.  
89 Shostakovich, 31-32.  
90 Yakubov, 155; Schwarz, 215, 277.  
91 Shostakovich, 37-38.
comique, *Les Cloche de Corneville*, which was one of the most popular operettas of its time. Shostakovich uses a line from the character Serpolette, “Look over here, look over there, don’t you like what you see?” and its accompanying theme; this musical theme was widely known in the Soviet theater and often used as an accompaniment to a can-can. Shostakovich included the same buoyant theme modifying the text to say, “Look here, look there, We’ll make the foe cringe in his lair,” which grows into a raucous climax for soloist and chorus before breaking into a final dance segment. If the general incongruity between the music and the text were not enough, Shostakovich includes the following footnote to the performer:

Description of the dance: On the motif ‘Look here’, the dancers should look here. On the motif ‘Look there’, the dancers should look there. The expression on the dancers’ faces should be such that our ideological enemies dissolve in terror.

What is often overlooked when judging the musical merits of *Anti-Formalist Rayok* is the fact that Shostakovich created a piece of music that strictly fulfills the requirements of the Socialist Realist aesthetic. He imitates the music of nineteenth century Russian classical composers, uses popular folk music, composes in a manner that is accessible to the masses, and is optimistic to the last note. Even the choice of topic fits the requirements of being “realistic” by placing the setting in a Soviet propaganda meeting, quoting actual speeches, and using mannerisms of real political figures. All the while, Shostakovich composes within the State-desired musical medium of the cantata.

The essential quality of satire is entertainment. It is a creation that offers criticism, not a solution; it is not created for moral instruction. While that may make it appear to lack depth on the surface, it by no means suggests that satire is an inconsequential art form. The failure to understand the depth of Shostakovich’s lampoon is often due to a lack of understanding of the

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92 Yakubov, 146.

93 Shostakovich, 42.
aesthetic it ridicules. The listener must perceive and comprehend the underlying incongruities in order for satire to be successful. Both the recipient and the sender must understand the value system that is being mocked. Because satire presents itself in a kind of ironic code, the listener must have a means to reconstruct the true message that is communicated covertly. The ill-defined nature of Socialist Realism as a musical aesthetic and the fact that it is a part of a specific time period in Soviet history could easily cause the subtleties of Shostakovich's satire to be overlooked. As a result, faults often found in *Rayok* are not the error of the composer, but in the lack of contextual understanding of the listener.\(^\text{94}\)

\(^{94}\) Feinberg, 7-8; Sheinberg, 28, 34.
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