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MODERATED MODERNISM IN RUSSIAN MUSIC AFTER 1953

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MODERATED modernism[1] has been a largely underestimated and misunderstood phenomenon. To call someone a moderated modernist thirty years ago would have been an insult, since the premises of musical criticism were built on the basis of modernist notions of progress and evolution. Although moderated modernism can be identified in various periods before and after the Second World War, throughout Europe, I will focus on Soviet (and more specifically, Russian) music after 1953,[2] and try to identify the political and artistic ideologies which surrounded it.[3]

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[1] It was Theodor W. Adorno who introduced this oxymoron (*gemässigte Moderne* in German). His attitude towards the 'style' was clearly negative, as he called it 'ominous', 'detestable', etc. Adorno argues that all the works created on the basis of 'old' means are false, conformist, regressive. He emphasises the truth-telling power of dissonance and argues that tonal music can no longer reflect social relations because it is worn out, empty and banal, hence it contributes to preserving the social order. Compare: T. W. Adorno, 'The Ageing of New Music', in R. Leppert (ed.), *Essays on Music* (Berkeley/Los Angeles/London: University of California Press, 2002), 197–198.

[2] None of the authors who produced seminal histories of Soviet post-war music defined the term moderate(d) modernism, although they did mention it *en passant*. Levon Hakobian devotes a chapter to 'several "*moderates*" and "*middle-roads*"' (Aleksandr Lokshin, Andrey Eshpay, Nikolay Sidel'nikov, Sergey Slonimsky, Rodion Shchedrin, Yuriy Falik and Yuriy Butzko) [emphasis mine]. L. Hakobian, *Music of the Soviet Age 1917-1987* (Stockholm: Melos, 1998), 314.

[3] The creation of avant-garde mythology and underestimation of moderated modernism had a strong political dimension in the context of the Cold War divide. Several American scholars, such as Richard Taruskin, Peter J. Schmelz, Danielle Fosler-Lussier et al., have investigated this matter in the recent years. For example, Danielle Fosler-Lussier stresses that the polarisation of judgments about what was valuable in the arts was an immediate product of this divide, as 'the dominant discourse in the West since mid-1940s equated difficult music with the idea of political freedom, and consonance with subservience and collaboration'. Compare: D. Fosler-Lussier, '"Multiplication by Minus One": Musical Values in East-West Engagement', *Slavonica* Vol. 10 No. 2 (2004), 125–138.

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The oxymoron 'moderated modernism'[4] denotes a socially acceptable, non-avant-garde, non-challenging form of modernism, whose main feature is the artists' desire to make peace between modernist and traditional ideas and ideals, as well as between regional and international ones. Composers who adopt moderated modernism are interested in approaching the dominant streams of international modernism; however, its most radical variants are alien to them.[5] Levon Hakobian describes the composers he dubs 'moderates' and 'middle-roads' in these terms: 'In regard to their stylistic preferences, none of them could be considered "conservative" i.e. indifferent to the innovatory tendencies coming from the West; on the other hand, none is really "advanced" in the same sense as those who are habitually referred to as the "avant-garde". Consequently, after the early 1950s not one among them was subjected to ideologically coloured critique.'[6]

Russia had a powerful modernist movement in the first two decades of the twentieth century. However, one product of the Soviet 'cultural policy' in the mid-1930s was a ban placed upon the works of Russia's own most prominent modernists, and at the same time, a deliberate and complete isolation from modernist movements throughout Europe.[7] After Stalin's death in 1953, the beginning of 'the Thaw' in the domain of arts and in Soviet society as a whole made the technical and ideological conditions for artistic creation slightly less repressive, which in turn initiated the processes of de-Zhdanovisation and re-approachment to the West. The 1958 decree acknowledging errors in the notorious resolution of 1948 confirmed the loosening of socialist realist dogma, although it did not imply rehabilitation of formalism. Nevertheless, once started, the process of modernisation and catching up with the rest of Europe could not be stopped, and by the early 1960s the soil was already prepared for the introduction of the Western avant-garde techniques.

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[4] Although 'moderated modernism' with various grammatical sub-variants is the term most commonly used to describe this type of artistic discourse, many other more-or-less synonyms have been in use. These range from descriptive to pejorative, depending on the scholars' theoretical and ideological positions. Some of them are: *moderate mainstream, moderately contemporary language, ostensibly moderate idiom, socialist aestheticism, academic modernism, tempered modernism, middle-of-the-road, humanistic tradition, tonal music with false notes, conservative-modern music, officially approved modernism, normal state of art, well-adjusted art,* etc. Compare: I. Medić, 'The Ideology of Moderated Modernism in Serbian Music and Musicology', *Muzikologija* No. 7 (2008), 279–294.

[5] Compare: M. Šuvaković, *Pojmovnik moderne i postmoderne likovne umetnosti i teorije posle 1950.* [Dictionary of Notions of Modern and Postmodern Visual Arts and Theory After 1950] (Belgrade/Novi Sad: SANU/Prometej, 1999), 194.

[6] L. Hakobian, 314.

[7] In the course of 1930s and 1940s this isolationist policy did not do much harm to the place of Soviet music in the broader context, since that was the period of consolidation and 'moderation' of modernist means throughout Europe. However, the first post-war decade witnessed a radical turnover in the West-European artistic policy and ideology, and the occurrence of a gap between Western and Eastern artistic ideals.

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However, what triggered moderated modernism most decisively was the fact that the entire country's policy in the periods of Khrushchev's and Brezhnev's rule shifted from Stalinist offensive integrationism and isolationism to defensive integrationism.[8] The state bureaucracy and artists 'agreed' on a corresponding goal: to end isolation, leave behind backwardness and import and 'domesticate' Western economic and cultural knowledge.

So, the Thaw had begun, but most composers were unsure how to proceed from there, since the canon of Socialist Realism was still officially enthroned, and remained so for the next two decades. Although the officials found art music generally unharmful because of its ambiguous and abstract nature (and therefore could tolerate excesses much easier than in more obviously mimetic arts such as film or literature), any attempt to establish continuity with the pre-war avant-garde, or even 'worse', to explore the European avant-garde of the time, was strongly discouraged. The general opinion among senior music professionals was that composers should seek novelty, but without discarding the traditional artistic means; also, that the gradual and continuous introduction of new techniques[9] was more desirable than an abrupt break with the past.[10]

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[8] The terms introduced by G. Peteri: 'A state socialist regime is characterized by *isolationism* when its dominant discourses, policies, and institutions are geared to minimize interaction with the outside world, especially with their systemic Other. [...] the period of Zhdanovschina until the early 1950s is certainly characterized by *offensive isolationism*, discourses of Soviet systemic and Russian national superiority asserted themselves [...]. Conversely, a state socialist regime is rightly described as *integrationist* when its dominant discourses, policies and institutions are geared to engaging in interaction with the outside world with a view to systemic expansion or/and to learning and catching up. *Offensive integrationism* is probably the right characterisation of Soviet expansion into East Central Europe from 1947 to 1952, and it went hand in hand with an offensive isolationism manifest to their relation to the US and towards 'Marshallized' Western Europe. [...] Finally, *defensive integrationism* was the dominant pattern, for example, in Hungary's (but also Poland's and the USSR's) cultural and academic relations with the West during most of the 1960s.' [emphasis mine] G. Peteri, 'Transnational and Transsystemic Tendencies in the Cultural Life of State-Socialist Russia and East-Central Europe, *Slavonica* Vol. 10 No. 2 (2004), 119–121.

[9] The term 'new' here has relative meaning, since in the USSR even neo-classicism could be new, because that style had been labeled 'formalist' and bitterly suppressed beforehand. As Yuri Kholopov noted, 'The word "neoclassicism" is paramount nowadays to "conservatism". Back in the 1950s it was an ideological scarecrow, a sort of "formalism". For at that time such neo-classical Western composers as Hindemith and Stravinsky were forbidden and considered to be dangerous.' Y. Kholopov, 'Andrei Volkonsky – the initiator: a profile of his life and work' in V. Tsenova (ed.), *Underground Music from the Former USSR* (Amsterdam: Harwood Academic Publishers, 1997), 4.

[10] For example, David Fanning notes that Shostakovich '... tried to face both ways, even in his public statements, welcoming and encouraging the new freedoms in general terms, but warning against any rush to adopt new styles. [...] Shostakovich himself could no longer be considered to be at the cutting edge of musical progressivism, even in his stylistically retarded homeland. Rather, he was in the *middle of the road*, the one side of which had unexpectedly shifted.' D. Fanning, *Shostakovich's Eighth Quartet* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2004), 30 [emphasis

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Gradually, socialist realism evolved into moderated modernism – modernist enough to promote the country's relative openness towards world, but not radical enough to criticise and disturb the established order. As for the young generation of 'unofficial' composers, as P. Schmelz notes, it '... became a matter of catching up – trying to absorb and master "new" techniques that already had established pedigrees in Europe and America. This generation was plagued by the doubts of newcomers, an inferiority complex that affected both the composition and the reception of its music'.[11] This attitude is very characteristic of defensive integrationism.[12]

The existing literature rarely offers descriptions of the stylistic features of moderated modernism, not just in Russia. Arnold Whittall identifies three typical features of the works belonging to the 'moderate mainstream': 1) the distinction between consonance and dissonance (even though this is not an absolute), 2) the identifiable presence of motivic or thematic statement and development, and 3) the consistent use of rhythmic, metric regularity.[13] However relevant, this description is too simplified: not only did moderated modernism comprise several, relatively independent, sub-styles, but it also evolved in the course of two decades (especially since, after the demise of Khrushchev in 1964 and the beginning of Brezhnev's détente, the conditions for music creation became more liberal). Since these various types of moderated modernism in Russia overlapped, the categorisation is only provisional:

- neo-classicism;
- neo-romanticism;
- neo-expressionism;
- 'polystylistics';
- official serialism, 'socialist realist serialism';
- neo-folkloristic wave;
- neo-primitivism;
- neo-religious/mystical wave.

Due to the limited scope of this paper, I will offer only a brief account on some of these tendencies.

The first style to be rehabilitated after the Thaw was neoclassicism. Although the anti-romanticism, detachment, irony and general anti-expressiveness of neoclassicism were 'ideologically' opposed to the bombastic rhetorics of so-

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mine]. See also: B. Schwarz , *Music and Musical Life in Soviet Russia, Enlarged Edition 1917–1981* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1983), 340.

[11] P. J. Schmelz, 'Andrey Volkonsky and the Beginnings'.

[12] About the Western reception of East-European moderated modernism, and various streams of criticism directed towards it, see: I. Medić, 'The Ideology of Moderated Modernism'.

[13] Whittall also claims that the works belonging to 'moderate mainstream' should refer not only to tonality but also to the established genres of tonal composition. A. Whittall: 'Individualism and Accessibility: The Moderate Mainstream, 1945-1975' in N. Cook and A. Pople (eds.), *The Cambridge History of Twentieth Century Music* (Cambridge University Press, 2004), 375.

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cialist realism, in comparison to other, more radical (dissonant, atonal) 'formalist' trends, neoclassicism was perceived as relatively accessible. That is why both Prokofiev and Shostakovich in the years preceding the Thaw, often ventured into neoclassicism, despite the ban. As soon as Stravinsky, Prokofiev, Bartók and Hindemith were 'rehabilitated' in the USSR, they emerged as convenient models for 'modernising' the realist idiom, and yet remaining accessible and upbeat. In general, this line of moderated modernism, whose most notable representative is Rodion Shchedrin (b. 1932) can be discerned in others (especially the, formally quite similar, polystylistic) by its generally cheerful and optimistic character (although not as bombastic as socialist realism), unpretentious, 'unserious' and somewhat anarchic approach to music making, eclectic assimilation of heterogeneous music(s) and the generally listener-friendly character of the music.

Within the neo-romantic stream, two relatively separate influences may be distinguished: one of them originating from the German-Austrian late romantic symphonic tradition, most notably from Mahler, the other from the Russian symphonic music of the Belyaev circle. As early as the 1930s, Mahler became one of the models for Soviet symphonism. As the dogma of socialist realism spread all over the music community, Shostakovich discovered in Mahler a prototype for a new symphonic model, which enabled him to keep things tonal, accessible, rhetorical, and yet remain credible.[14] Small wonder, then, that in 1953 Shostakovich reverted to a Mahlerian model and produced his first symphony in eight years. The resulting piece, Tenth Symphony, is the first (the only) considerable symphonic work written in the early Thaw years. Since the process of modernisation had only just begun at that moment, the Tenth is quite 'moderate'. Francis Maes believes the work to offer 'the re-affirmation of official aesthetics', a 'return to the model of heroic classicism'.[15] However, although the eclectic musical language of the symphony is by no means daring, the complexity of symphonic process, the dense web of allusions and references, and the avoidance of straightforward affirmation, made the work soundly modern/ist enough to provoke fierce debate and challenge the cultural criteria.

The neo-expressionist stream developed as the composers who adhered to neo-romanticism began to 'sharpen' the emotional tone of their works towards expressionist tensions. Later on some of them introduced elements of twelve-

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[14] The following aspects of Mahler's oeuvre served as models for Soviet/Russian symphonism: 1) great philosophical-ethical Pathos, 2) grounding the symphony on song, 3) linking expression at all costs to a distinctive emotional character in the music, 4) an exceptional command of the apparatus of the orchestra and the human voice. See L. Botstein: 'Listening to Shostakovich' in L. E. Fay (ed.), *Shostakovich and His World* (Princeton/Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2004), 372.

[15] Francis Maes, *A History of Russian Music (From Kamarinskaya to Babi Yar)*, transl. by A. J. Pomerans and E. Pomerans (Berkeley/Los Angeles/London: University of California Press, 2002), 357–358.

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note and serial techniques, but never according to the rules of serial composition. Shostakovich's turn to note-rows in the mid-1960s was a somewhat logical extension of his already chromatic language, and in these works he delineated the semantic/programmatic field of twelve-note themes, mostly used to symbolise the fearful, obscure, shadowy aspects of human existence.[16]

As one of the heirs of the 'humanist' symphonic tradition (and Shostakovich's pupil), Boris Tishchenko (b. 1939) tried to communicate an ethical message, usually by confronting contrasting types of musical utterance having different 'ethical indices'. Valentina Kholopova branded his expressive urge 'the universal outcry', even claiming that 'this outburst is stronger and more desperate than the one produced, for instance, by the (twentieth) century Viennese expressionists.'[17] However, Tishchenko's prime influences were Prokofiev and Stravinsky, and his relation to expressionism was to a great degree mediated by Shostakovich. Although he went on to embrace a whole range of avant-garde procedures, and even invented some of his own, he always applied them in a typically 'Russian' manner, not as abstract 'meaningless' techniques, but as *symbols*, suitable for all sorts of illustrative and expressive effects; and in doing so he never departed from Shostakovichian symphonic tradition.

The years of 'defrosting' ideological pressures led to the emergence of the so-called 'Second avant-garde'. Members of this generation[18] felt the urge to discover 'new' sound worlds, whether those of pre-war modernism, post-war Western avant-garde or their country's own modernist past – in short, all kinds of 'formalist' music that had been banned for decades. They tried out and adopted various 'new' compositional methods, in a highly idiosyncratic manner.[19] Both foreign and domestic critics attacked the 'young composers': the Westerners finding this music too 'Russian', as they only noticed its 'historical lateness' and 'stylistic impurity'. On the other hand, Soviet art officials mocked

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[16] Schmelz argues that Shostakovich employed twelve-note themes in his works from the 1960s as: 1) catalysts of harmonic instability and atonality, 2) condensed "signifiers" of harmonic instability or atonality that needed to be quickly "resolved", 3) a means of creating an effect of long-term shifting instability, only occasionally landing on semi-stable ground, 4) a clear, condensed opposition to tonal writing, or 5) a wash of sound, akin to the noise experiments of the Polish avant-garde. Compare: P. J. Schmelz, 'Shostakovich's "Twelve-Tone" Compositions and the Politics and Practice of Soviet Serialism', in L. E. Fay (ed.), *Shostakovich and His World,* 308–309.

[17] V. Kholopova: 'Boris Tishchenko: striking spontaneity against a rationalistic background', in Tsenova (ed.), *Underground Music from the Former USSR,* 51.

[18] Notable members of this generation were: Edison Denisov (1929–96), Alfred Schnittke (1934–98), Sofia Gubaidulina (b. 1931), Arvo Pärt (b. 1935), Valentin Silvestrov (b. 1937) and many others.

[19] Schmelz notes that: 'They desperately wanted to emulate the West [...]. It was only when they gained fuller access to twelve-tone scores from the West in the 1960s and 1970s that they realized they had been doing it "incorrectly."' Schmelz, 'Andrey Volkonsky and the beginnings'.

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the 'young composers' for unsuccessfully imitating what the Western avant-garde had already done.[20] One might argue that this 'local avant-garde'[21] actually belongs to moderated modernism, for both technical and ideological reasons. Firstly, its artistic means were only novel (and 'shocking') in the local environment. It emerged through the process of gradual assimilation of new technical means, and not through radical and organised artistic revolution. Besides, it never really questioned the entire ideology of Soviet moderated modernism, which could be described as the defensive-integrationist determination to open towards Europe and 'modernise' and actualise Soviet culture, but not at the cost of destroying the existing institutions of musical and cultural life, and without calling for the radical denial of tradition. But although Soviet officials and foreign audiences had no illusions about the novelty of the young Soviets' compositions,[22] what made them sound 'avant-garde' to domestic ears were not only the (relatively) new techniques they introduced, but even more, the composers' anti-conformist attitude, 'unofficial' status, rebellion against the establishment, and the courage to embrace the banned techniques.[23] Another 'new' feature was the fact that they (at least in the beginning) departed from realist gestures and turned to abstract, 'non-expressive', 'formalist' compositional models. So, if we apply only musical criteria, the 'Second avant-garde' was yet another type of defensive integrationism; but in the Soviet context it indeed

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[20] Reflections of this attitude can be seen even in relatively recent publications. For example, Mikhail Tarakanov asserts that: "... the very existence of the avant-garde in Russian music at the turn of the 1960s could be questioned... [...] All these [Western, avant-garde] trends found their expression in the music of Soviet 'avant-gardists' *as mere reverberations, being used in more than moderate, sometimes even in homeopathic doses.* As for the main attraction for the young composers, their ears *and minds were primarily preoccupied with the classical, Schoenberg's dodecaphony, which by that time had been a long stage past and gone for Western musicians.*" [emphasis mine] Mikhail Tarakanov, 'A drama of non-recognition: a profile of Nikolai Karetnikov's life and work' in V. Tsenova (ed.), *Underground Music from the Former USSR*, 102.

[21] M. Veselinović-Hofman introduced the notion of 'local [or pseudo] avant-garde' to describe local versions/receptions of European post-war avant-garde(s) in the countries 'outside' European artistic 'centre' in: M. Veselinović, *Stvaralačka prisutnost evropske avangarde u nas* [The Creative Presence of European Avant-Garde in Serbian Music] (Beograd: Univerzitet umetnosti, 1983), 33–34.

[22] Again, Tarakanov's writings offer a good example: '*It did not matter that this music was often of secondary nature, nor that it merely repeated the composition procedures discovered by such masters of the foreign cultural centers as Boulez, Nono, Stockhausen, Ligeti, Lutosławski and other major and minor gods of the avant-garde.* The prime value of this music for the West was due to the very fact that it had been written over there, in snow-white Russia and therefore it was entitled to indulgence on the part of strict arbiters making allowances for the *inevitable provinciality of the neophytes...*' [emphasis mine]. M. Tarakanov, 'Vyacheslav Artyomov: in search of artistic truth' in V. Tsenova (ed.), *Underground Music from the Former USSR*, 145–146.

[23] Peter J. Schmelz investigated the unofficial status of these composers in: 'Shostakovich's "Twelve-Tone" Compositions', 308-353. He observed that 'The unofficial composers were not only younger, but politically and musically set apart from other Soviet composers. "Unofficial" is not only a generational distinction, but a political, social, and stylistic one.' Ibid, 323.

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produced an avant-garde impact and gradually changed the profile of the country's musical scene.

The breakthrough of the 'Second avant-garde' in the early 1960s was a major shock, not only for the representatives of the official socialist realist line, but also for prominent moderated modernists of the older generation, because they suddenly found themselves old-fashioned and irrelevant to youngsters. A key example here is Shostakovich himself, and his very personal adoption of note rows was an attempt to re-bond with the young and become relevant again.

The infatuation with dodecaphony and serialism of young Soviet composers did not last long, as they soon grew dissatisfied with the abstract approach to composition. As early as the mid-1960s they were trying out the most divergent compositional devices, and even more so, exploring their potential to convey meaning and transmit political, philosophical and ethical messages more directly and expressively. Hence the composers turned to (what else) – Shostakovichian allusions, quotations, hidden messages craving for hermeneutical interpretation – only this time around using a variety of contemporary compositional techniques, and often superposing them in a deliberately crude manner. Consequently their styles evolved in the direction of re-assessing the entire traditions of European artistic, liturgical, popular and folk music(s). In 1971 Alfred Schnittke 'baptised' the new, eclectic trend as 'polystylistics'.[24] As Richard Taruskin notes, 'Like so many composers in the 1970s [...] Schnittke abandoned serial technique out of a conviction that no single or "pure" manner was adequate to reflect contemporary reality, and that stylistic eclecticism [...] had become mandatory.'[25] The Soviet polystylistics went on to become a major trend and a good export product – as its emergence coincided with the shift of cultural paradigms in the Western societies and the emergence of postmodernism. It is also worth noting that, ever since the mid-1960s and throughout 1970s, the most prominent 'official modernists' and 'unofficial avant-gardists' (such as Shchedrin and Schnittke respectivelly) were writing rather similar music: however, in his public appearances Shchedrin propagated the ideology of moderateness (and was quickly promoted into the highest ranks of the Composers' Union), while Schnittke chose to point to hypocrisies in artistic evaluation, confront the officials and let his works get premiered in the West – which made him *persona non grata* with the officials. The difference between the official and unofficial composers was predominantly a matter of the ideological position of the authors, their rhetorics and autopoetics, and the role they chose to play within the country's musical community. Still, it was precisely the more adventurous among the 'official' composers, such as Shchedrin himself, who ac-

[24] Al. Schnittke, 'Polystylistic Tendencies in Contemporary Music' in A. Ivashkin (ed.), *A Schnittke Reader*, transl. by John Goodliffe (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2002), 87–90.

[25] R. Taruskin, *The Oxford History of Western Music*, Vol. V 'The Late Twentieth Century' (Oxford/New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 465.

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tually contributed to the final 'rehabilitation' of avant-garde devices in the eyes of suspicious Soviet cultural officials. In his popular oratorios *Poetorio* (1968) and *Lenin in Folk's Heart* (1969), Shchedrin proved that it was possible to combine the advanced Western techniques with Russian folklore and ideologically 'correct' texts. Besides, Hakobian notes that the supposedly 'non-conformist' Schnittke was not among the victims of the 1960s anti-avant-garde campaign, and that a good deal of the Soviet intelligentsia regarded him as an irreproachable representative of their class, 'who, in the era of overall ethical, intellectual and spiritual decadence kept on speaking to the public about eternal matters in a rich, meaningful, and yet fully intelligible language.'[26] This is an almost exact moderated modernist's position, and in that respect Hakobian rightly compares the significance of Schnittke for his contemporaries to that of Shostakovich a couple of decades earlier.

As for the problem of the final evaluation of moderated modernism, it cannot be addressed here, as that would require examining the emergence of postmodernism in the West, and the consequences of the changing of political, cultural and ideological contexts and paradigms on both sides of the Cold War divide. These changes brought forth the critiques of the avant-garde in the West and, consequentially, altered the profile of both art music and its criticism and historiography. In any case, calling someone a moderated modernist is not such an insult anymore; one might say today that Russian moderated modernism was neither good nor bad, or it was both, depending on the ideologies brought to bear on it which, in turn, determine one's criteria for evaluation.

Ивана Медић

УМЕРЕНИ МОДЕРНИЗАМ У РУСКОЈ МУЗИЦИ ПОСЛЕ 1953. ГОДИНЕ

Резиме

Након краће расправе о појму умереног модернизма, у раду се класификују различити типови руског умереног модернизма после 1953. године и потом укратко анализирају неки од њих (неокласицизам, неоромантизам, неоекспресионизам и "друга авангарда"). Стаљинова смрт 1953. године означила је почетак раздобља у којем су услови за уметничко стваралаштво у Русији (и читавом Совјетском Савезу) постали нешто либералнији, те је – након готово две деценије потпуне изолације од модернистичких

[26] L. Hakobian, 282.

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покрета широм Европе – иницирaн процес поновног приближавања Западу. Мада декрет из 1958. године (којим су признате грешке озлоглашене Ждановљеве резолуције из 1948. године) није означио и напуштање доктрине социјалистичког реализма, једном започет процес модернизације више није било могуће зауставити. Већ почетком шездесетих година припремљено је тло за увођење најсавременијих композиционих техника. Међутим, већина руских композитора сматрала је да посезање за "новинама" не треба да означи и напуштање традиционалних форми и изражајних средстава, те да је постепено и континуирано увођење нових техника пожељније од радикалног раскида са прошлошћу. Постепено, социјалистички реализам је еволуирао у умерени модернизам – довољно "модеран" да афирмише релативну отвореност новог режима, али недовољно радикалан да истински уздрма етаблирани културно-уметнички (и политички) поредак. Западноевропски критичари углавном су уочавали негативне стране умереног модернизма, његово "историјско кашњење" и "стилску нечистоту"; међутим, сагледан у контексту совјетске музике тог доба, овај "стил" је несумњиво имао и позитивних страна и допринео је постепеној измени профила целокупне руске музичке сцене.

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