



ALEXANDER I. DEMCHENKO

*Center for Comprehensive Art Studies, Saratov State L. V. Sobinov Conservatory
Saratov, Russia*

ORCID: 0000-0003-4544-4791, alexdem43@mail.ru

Society as the Paradigm of 20th Century Art (on the Materials of Sergei Prokofiev's Music)

According to the traditional perspective of the nature of the musical art, it is characterized by a rather modest potential for depicting elements connected with social relations. In reality, though, society exerts a pervading impact on music. One of the proofs may be demonstrated in the legacy of Sergei Prokofiev, who always stayed aloof from politics. Analytical study is presented here of three of Prokofiev's works directly relevant to the annals of the "country of the Soviets." As a leading representative of the "Scythian" trends in the arts, the composer made the attempt in an appropriate manner to portray the revolutionary events of Russia in 1917 in his cantata "Seven, They are Seven" (1918). The meaning of the events depicted in this work may be viewed as a grandiose ritual of violent subversion. The global character of the scope combined with a semi-fantastic color is capable of evoking the picture of the Great Flood, or a Great Advent. The "Cantata for the 20th Anniversary of October" (1937) recreates a holistic view of the development of the revolutionary movement, reconstructing the gradual movement from the irradiation of communist ideas in the West before their implementation in Russia. By means of the entire aggregate of artistic expression Prokofiev clearly actualizes the verbal outline (texts from the political writings of Marx, Engels, Lenin and Stalin), assimilating it to the realities of the mid-1930s, and with a catching temperament conveys the atmosphere of the social confrontation of that time period. Prokofiev's Sixth Symphony (1947) depicts with extraordinary prominence the opposition of two elemental principles in a way characteristic of the "cold war" – one of which is aggressively overpowering, and the other personifying the humanistic values of human existence.

Keywords: society and the art of music, depiction in Prokofiev's works of the most important milestones of life in Russia in the first half of the 20th century.

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А. И. ДЕМЧЕНКО

*Центр комплексных художественных исследований
Саратовская государственная консерватория имени Л. В. Собинова
г. Саратов, Россия*

ORCID: 0000-0003-4544-4791, alexdem43@mail.ru

Социум как парадигма искусства XX века (на материале творчества С. С. Прокофьева)

Согласно традиционным взглядам на сущность музыкального искусства, ему свойствен достаточно скромный потенциал в отображении того, что касается общественных

отношений. На самом деле, социум оказывает всепроникающее воздействие на музыку. Одним из доказательств может послужить наследие С. Прокофьева, который всегда чуждался политики. Предлагаются аналитические этюды трёх произведений Прокофьева, имеющих прямое касательство к летописи «страны Советов». Будучи ведущим представителем «скифства», композитор в соответствующей манере попытался претворить революционные события России 1917 года в кантате «Семеро их» (1918). Смысл происходящего в ней можно представить как грандиозный обряд неистового ниспровержения. Глобальность охвата в сочетании с полуфантастическим колоритом способны вызвать ассоциации с картиной всемирного потопа, великого пришествия. «Кантата к XX-летию Октября» (1937) воссоздаёт целостную панораму развития революционного движения, реконструируя поэтапное движение от зарниц коммунистической идеи на Западе до её воплощения в жизнь в России. Всем строем художественного высказывания Прокофьев явно актуализирует вербальную канву (тексты из политических трудов Маркса, Энгельса, Ленина, Сталина), проецируя её на реалии середины 1930-х годов, и с захватывающим темпераментом передаёт атмосферу социального противоборства этого времени. В Шестой симфонии Прокофьева (1947) с чрезвычайной рельефностью запечатлено характерное для времён «холодной войны» противостояние двух начал – агрессивно-подавляющего, с одной стороны, и олицетворяющего гуманистические ценности человеческого существования, – с другой.

Ключевые слова: социум и музыкальное искусство, отображение в творчестве Прокофьева важных вех жизни России первой половины XX века.

Art has always described and shall describe with its diversified languages everything connected with the world and man in their past, present and future. At the same time, the language of the musical art has usually been assigned a more modest role, in many ways limiting it, first of all, to the emotional and lyrical spheres. In reality, however, the depictive resources in music are no less capacious than those in the other arts – especially, since the former is endowed with an incomparable potential of the broadest summations.

Nonetheless, if one is guided by the traditional views of the essence and potentials of music, then it becomes necessary to admit of its rather modest achievement in the domain of what is exceedingly remote from the seeming lyrical and emotional spheres usually ascribed to it. What is meant here is the so-called social domain – a conception which defines in the broad sense everything

connected with the life of human society and the state of social relations.

And, indeed, music has provided relatively few depictions of the social domain. In the past the most distinctive examples of such depiction may be found in the genre of historical opera, in a number of Handel's oratorios and Beethoven's symphonies. Against this background it is necessary for us to acknowledge the sharply rising significance of the conceptuality of such a type in 20th century music.

It suffices to think of the figure of Dmitri Shostakovich, the creator of a grandiose epopee of what was occurring in the social history not only of the Soviet Union, which was situated on the most extreme cutting edge of global processes, but of the world in general.

In order to illustrate the pervading impact of the social domain on the music of the previous century, let us turn to the heritage

of Sergei Prokofiev as a kind of apagogic proof. The fact of the matter is that this elder contemporary of Shostakovich stayed aloof from politics at all cost, attempting to concentrate wholeheartedly on his own music and to partition himself off from anything which could become an obstacle to a free expression of his artistic will.

Nonetheless, “*it is impossible to live within society and to remain free of society.*” May the truthfulness of this postulate of Lenin be validated by the studies offered below of three of Prokofiev’s works bearing direct connection with the chronicles of “*the country of the Soviets.*” For greater conviction the selection of these compositions has been made in such a way that we would have at our disposal three distinct time periods: the late 1910s, the mid-1930s and the second half of the 1940s.

The music of Sergei Prokofiev presents a phenomenon which is extremely multifaceted and many-sided. One of the hypostases of his early music was connected with a special, to the highest degree unconventional artistic occurrence which has left a mark in the history of early 20th century culture with an entire “array” of definitions.

The basic one of them is “*paganism,*” and this designation appeared, stemming from the musical composition which has become the “Alpha and Omega” of this trend. We are referring here to Igor Stravinsky’s ballet “The Rite of Spring” with its subtitle “*Pictures of Pagan Rus.*”

Paralleling with this term a number of others have been registered in art studies, most frequently used as synonyms: the *barbaristic* (from “barbarity”) and the *Scythian* (from the “Scythians”). It was particularly Prokofiev who was destined to become the chief representative of the third of these tendencies.

The Scythian images, which emerged in a considerable number of his compositions (“Obsession” from *opus 4*, Toccata *opus 11*, Allemande from Ten Pieces *opus 12*, etc.), received their maximal concentration in the ballet “Ala and Lolly,” subsequently revised into a four-movement orchestral composition with the symptomatic title “*Scythian Suite*” (1914).

This type of imagery received an unexpected turn in connection with the revolutionary events in Russia in 1917. Special attention in connection with “revolutionary Scythian qualities” is merited by Prokofiev’s cantata “**Seven, They are Seven**” (1917–1918). The signification of what occurs in it may be fathomed as a grandiose rite of relentless subversion.

From the very beginning an atmosphere of catastrophe and a spirit of pandemic breakup is established. The rampant quality of the orchestra and choral lines, their chaotic stratifications, tremors and plunges of sound masses, the figurative effects of the storming (the vibration of trills and tremolos, the whirl-like passages) create the impression of absolute instability, agitation and chaos, in which there is an effusion of primordial forces bursting forth as if from the depths of the earth. These are extra-personal, universal forces pertaining to the elemental current of moving aggregations. And despite the presence of a coryphaeus (the tenor *solo*), everything is defined by the extra-saturated sound of the large chorus and a quadruple orchestra (with the participation of two bass drums).

In this case the human billow is driven by the ecstasy of rebellious raging expressed in bellicose cries and exclamations. Everything is permeated with the highest intensity founded on the comprehensive role of the tritone and the Locrian mode, on extremely harsh dissonances and on energized sounds. Communication of

ecstatic character is served by a fanciful, yet very effective synthesis of fauvist and expressionist emphasis. Many elements are built on imitation of outcries, on a wailing and bellowing intonation (including the “barbarian” *glissandi*), on various stamping and clattering effects (at the same time, a rather important role is played by the harsh, raucous timbre of the xylophone), and during the culminations, according to Izrail Nestyev’s characterization “the sonority of the chorus and orchestra reaches a state of frenzy” [4, p. 166]. It may be that the composer demonstrates himself as being somewhat naïve in this pressurization of horrors and daunting actions, nonetheless, he achieves his goal. He is successful at recreating the incredible intensity of fury, even a sort of frenzy of a mass force, which in a wild fanaticism crushes under itself all and sundry and flares up itself in an orgy of self-incineration.

Nestyev fairly evaluates the cantata as “one of Prokofiev’s most extremist oeuvres,” adding that “the composer put into this work all the impulsivity of his temperament, flustered by the vibrant atmosphere of the time” [Ibid., p. 167].

The “overtones” of the revolutionary epoch assert themselves during those moments when the motion of the elemental force is recast into rhythms of an organized procession (this happens twice – at rehearsal numbers 10 and 18). The harshly imprinted footfall, exacerbated by a hammered scansion (with the phonetic intensification “*Sem-me-rro ikh*” [there are seven of them]), is accordant with the imagery and instrumentation of Vladimir Mayakovsky’s poems of the same years 1917 and 1918 (“Our March,” “Left March”). But at the same time from the asceticism and self-renunciation of this march-like motion with all distinctiveness there is a protrusion felt of contours of an imperious, suppressive force,

its inexorability, mercilessness, which is reflected in the text: “They are cruel! They do not know any mercy. They will not hear any prayers – they do not have an ear for supplications.”

The expansion of this force is immeasurable in its encroachments. Hence comes the special extension of the scales, the exceptional hyperbolism of the images. The globality of the scope in combination of the half-fantastic color are capable of arousing associations with the picture of the global deluge, the great coming. The ritualistic character of the occurring events becomes invigorated in this association. The sacral and necromantic functions are exposed here to the greatest degree. The composer’s conscious attitude is stated in the work’s subtitle: “*Chaldean Invocation*.”

Many things had been predetermined by Konstantin Balmont’s text, which presents a free deciphering of an Ancient Hebrew inscription. Stemming from this text, the composer brings in a whole set of ritual formulas (especially frequently the watchword “*Zaklyani!*” [“Enchant!”] is sounded, at times with multifold repetitions of one note, as in rehearsal number 32), and the verbal-musical integral whole is perceived as a mystery rite of furious, ecstatic incantations, prophecies and invocations.

The magic of ritualism, the apocalyptic tinge, the fantastic contours, the immersion into the element of the irrationally instinctive – everything speaks of an intuitive understanding of the cataclysms of those years. An additional testimony to this is provided by the cantata’s conclusion (rehearsal number 37): the swift attenuation of the sonority, the unintelligible prosody of male voices, the desolate tremolo in the bass drum, the pedal of the open fifth poised in the muted string instruments in the extreme registers – i.e., the narration seems to expire in the mist of time, dissolving in the unknown.

Nobody has the right to demand from Prokofiev of those years a concrete historical comprehension of the events which took place – the composer responded to them in a way suggested him by his artistic intuition, which motivated him to convey in unreal-symbolic images the affluence of the greatest violent civil unrest, the sensation of a grandiose breakage of the world, the eruption of unprecedented forces, the menacing tread of the “revolutionary Huns.”

The conception of the “*Cantata for the 20th Anniversary of the October Revolution*” appeared in Prokofiev’s mind immediately after his return to the Soviet Union. Having directly encountered the new reality, he conceived of a monumental work which would recreate an integral panorama of the development of the revolutionary movement, reconstructing its phased motion from the inception of the communist idea in the West to its implementation in Russia, including the moment of adoption in 1936 of the socialist constitution of the USSR.

At the same time, he was not satisfied with the well-trodden path of literary scenarios. The composer, who in his operas rejected the traditional verse libretto texts, sought for something adequate in the verbal aspect for his oratorio about the Revolution. Thereby appeared the bold thought of basing the libretto on the texts of the authors considered to be the classics of Marxism-Leninism, to which in the 1930s, besides Marx, Engels and Lenin, the “*leader of the peoples*” was also ranked. And it must be emphasized: the composer chose such fragments which were expounded, as he judged, “*in such a vivid, brilliant and convincing language*,” that all the more so it seemed meaningless to him to transcribe them into a poetic manner.

Prokofiev began to realize what he conceived of with such an unfeigned

enthusiasm, inspired by what was being carried out in his homeland, seen by him after many years of emigration. Having assembled a montage of the documentary-journalistic prose, he gained the approval of the state monitors of Soviet art, having received a commission from the All-Union Radio in 1935, and in the summer of 1937 completed his work on this project, which was incredible in its boldness and originality.

Thereby, the process of creation of the composition spanned the entire period of the first half and the mid-1930s, when, despite the sharp confrontation between various positions, the contours of the life pattern and the governmental system of the “Stalin era” were being formed. The present circumstances defined the essential revised accentuation of the verbal groundwork in its musical realization by actualizing the plot in relation to the concrete events occurring before the composer’s eyes.

Judging by the level of conflict of the figurative-dramaturgical profile in a set of musical compositions, the USSR in the 1930s was characterized by a complex political setting, which became especially tense towards the middle of the decade, when real ideological battles raged in the country. And it turned out that it was possible to convey this even in the format of the so-called government contract, but only by using the language of allusions.

In this sense the “*Cantata for the 20th Anniversary of the October Revolution*” is very exemplary. The line of social drama consistently unfolds here in the beginning in the solely orchestral first, third and fifth movements. In the first two of them (the Introduction with the epigraph “*The specter of communism is walking across Europe*” and Interlude I) the conflicting tension is connected with an opposition of the images of evil and the people’s suffering caused by it.

What was presumed under evil was the monster of capitalism depicted with a poster-like grotesquerie, the pathologically predatory, horrendous veneer of which is conveyed literary through the roar of the low brass guided by the tuba. In this odious aggressive image, upon will, it is also possible to capture the insulation of the inhumane essence of the practice of repressive persecution actively developing in the “country of the Soviets.”

The gradually emerging setting of confrontation is particularly perceptible in the fifth movement (Interlude II), and the invocatory cries sounding here, along with the thundering turmoil already directly presage the burst of fierce battles in the following, sixth movement, which is the most unfolded and dynamic, based on texts of Lenin’s articles and letters from the time of the revolutionary events of October 1917.

Almost two decades prior to that, under the direct impact of what was occurring at that time, the composer imprinted the elemental force of the grandiose breakage of the world in his cantata “Seven. They are Seven.” However, the latter presented a semi-fantastic metaphor, and stylistically this featured a totally different type of music. In this case, indicating the present movement of the “October Cantata” by the word “*Revolution*,” Prokofiev expressly actualizes the verbal groundwork with the entire framework of artistic utterance, projecting it on the realities of the mid-1930s.

This is a veritably “squally” culmination of the composition, and the composer brings in the maximally possible performer resources: two choruses (a professional and an amateur one), a quadruple ensemble within the symphony orchestra, a wind band and an amateur orchestra, as well as an ensemble of accordions (bayans). According to the composer’s conception,

the overall number of musicians was required to amount to five hundred people.

The initial episodes of this work, comprising its prologue, convey the conditions of accumulation of forces and are rendered prevailing in a psychological plan. In the unsteady, half-transparent atmosphere of a cautious lull the dialogue between the wavering (female voices) and the radicals (male voices) is engendered.

The latter insist upon a resolute, immediate coup and, unlike the timid ascertainment of the former (“*a crisis has brewed*”), demand imperatively instantly to overcome “the capitalist monstrosity,” being absolutely certain that “*victory is guaranteed to the insurgency*.” And their determined, willful attitude prevails in the heated debates *pro et contra*.

The subsequent action is unfolded in the guise of a grandiose panorama of battle scenes swiftly succeeding each other. These eventful dynamics is appertained by an abundance of brilliant themes interlocked in a unified stream by montage techniques of film dramaturgy interlocked into a single stream. An overriding intensity of confrontation, its truly fire-breathing bubbling is spurred on by a heated pulsation of stirring rhythms and the “motor” of one-measure *ostinati*.

The atmosphere of street battles is recreated by means of a most virtuosic musical imagery: swift passages, signal quality, at times directly stemming from a raucously sharp tapping of a Morse telegraph (with sounds of minor second intervals), a chain reaction of roll calls of choral groups and direct “footage from nature” (roars of sirens and pictorial effects of firefights with rifles, cracks of machine guns, artillery cannonade).

Aspiring to emphasize the replicable spirit of mass meetings, the composer brings in accordion folk-tunes. The poster-

like pointedness of the imagery is enhanced by the rousing agitation slogans (from the image of the leader of the Bolsheviks with the use of a microphone): “We shall take away all the bread and all the boots from the capitalists. We shall leave them only crusts, we shall clothe them with bast shoes...”

In his music Prokofiev evidently actualizes the depicted events of twenty years before, conveying with a captivating temperament the rampant atmosphere and the ebullience of the ferocious conflicts of the mid-1930s.

In all likelihood, he perceived the party purges, the battle against the “enemies of the people” and the government-run terror taking place in the country as a certain necessity. The composer disengages from evaluations (either positive or negative) and does not penetrate into the underpinning – the most important thing for him in this dramatic fresco was to convey the overall atmosphere of the time with its acuteness and its utmost intension.

With all the signification of the conflicting-dramatic scenes, the chief accent in the cantata is placed not as much on the motives of the struggle, as on the pictures of restful life (among other things, in its scale – six movements out of ten are devoted to this).

In the final count, the determinant idea of the composition turns out to be the overcoming of social contradictions and the “negativity” of the first half of the 1930s, with the setting of the course of equability, stabilization, harmoniousness and optimal tonicity of life manifestations, light and clarity. Thereby, the revolutionary subject matter with the pathos of subversion and destruction customary for it is interpreted in the cantata predominantly in the angle of positive asserting and constructive elements.

Just as the line of the social drama had its culmination in the sixth movement, so

for the given figurative sphere the crucial movement turns out to be the second (“The Philosophers”) – a sort of “pinnacle-source,” since its music is the most expressive, and the essence of what is expressed in it is subsequently projected onto the other movements with the similar directedness.

Against the background of the unhurried (*Andante assai*), albeit tirelessly active repetitive motion (the orchestra and the male chorus in a ceaseless pulsation of eighth note durations chanting the word “*filosofy*” [“philosophers”]) the female voices in broad durations intone an extraordinarily beautiful, spacious and majestic incantation of the famous thesis “Philosophers have merely explained the world in various ways, but the point is that it must be changed” (Karl Marx, “Theses about Ludwig Feuerbach”).

The unfading background rhythm fills the plasticity of the melodic line, and this conjugacy of two mutually complementary textural strata (the measured pace of the upper and the tireless “working motor” of the lower) creates a remarkably saturating sound. Moreover, the impressive capacity of the image is to a great extent also defined by rich modal-harmonic effects of light and shade in a purely Prokofievian style of extended diatonicism (generally: *C–G–F–D-flat–d–A–B-flat–B–C*). This forms the development of the inspired hymn, the assertive spirit of creativeness, bearing in itself calm and confidence.

By varying this image of constructive activity in multiple ways in the following movements, the composer brings into it a stern, serious feeling, a tone of determined inflexibility, which strengthens the significance of declamatory intoning (4th movement, “We go in a tight group...” and 8th movement “Oath”), at other times, basing himself on the feeling of light lyrical epos, accentuating the features of gentle

tranquility and even the sense of achieved affluence (7th movement, “Victory”) and, finally, brings us out to states of overall joyful ascent, coloring it with triumphantly festive laud (9th movement – the instrumental “Symphony” and 10th movement – “Constitution”). In all cases, the spirit conveyed by Lenin’s phrase set to music in the 7th movement, “*We need the measured pace of the iron battalions of the proletariat*,” so concordant with the spirit of the second half of the 1930s, was asserted with all possible force.

An important constituent element of such a mood was that of collectivist solidarity, and Prokofiev asserts this in every possible way, decidedly rejecting the use of solo numbers. The masses of people here present not simply the chief protagonist, but the main one. The guise of this collective hero in the “Cantata for the 20th Anniversary of the October Revolution” is expressed by the mural manner of writing and the broad usage of poster effects of ostentatious-viewable depiction.

Being on a par with such compositions from the mid-1930s as Dmitri Shostakovich’s Fourth Symphony and Aram Khachaturian’s Piano Concerto (both having been composed in 1936), the “Cantata for the 20th Anniversary of the October Revolution” set forward an extremely original variant of the interpretation of the predominating theme of those years: the vital search and overcoming of the sharp contrariety along the path of the final assertion of positive values of real existence.

It remains to add that notwithstanding all the correspondence with the demands of its time, this sonic monument was regarded by the governmental authorities as an experiment doomed to failure; what was deemed inappropriate was the “sacrilegious” treatment of the texts of the “*classics of Marxism-Leninism*.” The composition was

first presented in public only three decades afterwards. Having been performed with great success, it clearly validated Mikhail Bulgakov’s statement “*Manuscripts do not burn*.”

The peaceful days which arrived in the second half of the decade of the 1940s after the long-sought Victory in the Great Patriotic War, as part of World War II, were unexpectedly exacerbated by the various manifestations of an unhealthy social-political environment. The drastically complicated relations between the socialist system being formed then headed by the USSR and the capitalist West led to the so-called “Cold War.”

Moreover, in a number of countries this war had also turned against its own peoples. Let us assume, in the United States of America there began a “witch hunt” and under the guise of the law inactivated there by McCarthy there was a fierce battle raging against dissention. Nonetheless, an especially harsh “tightening of the screws” took place in our country, where in the second half of the 1940 the final wave of Stalin’s terror erupted.

One of the reasons of the rampancy of repressions in the USSR which took place may be seen as follows. During the years of the Great Patriotic War society became consolidated to the greatest degree and marched in a single arrayal under the slogan “*everything for the front, everything for victory*.” From the perspective of practicality of the totalitarian regime, a certain ideal of subservience of the masses to the supreme authorities had been achieved. Naturally, the ruling establishment wished to consolidate this ideal for the ensuing future perspective as well. And in order to keep a tight rein on the people and ensure their submission, they deemed it necessary to apply the levers of intimidation.

The main blow was directed against the intelligentsia, which had still preserved the ability of critical analysis, of various types of doubts and hesitations. Among other things, a campaign against culture was declared. In 1946 and 1948 a number of party edicts came out dealing with the domains of literature and the art of music, where the cream of artistic elite was accused of all the mortal sins.

Whether consciously or intuitively, the occurring developments in society received a certain amount of reflection in art. As for Russian music, this acute problem of the first postwar years was developed with the greatest distinctness in three outstanding compositions: Dmitri Shostakovich's Third String Quartet (1946), Sergei Prokofiev's **Sixth Symphony** (1947) and Reinhold Gliere's ballet "The Bronze Horseman" (1949).

Let us turn to Prokofiev's symphony, since it imprints with the maximal force and wish special salience the struggle between two elements – the aggressive and suppressive, on the one hand, and that which personifies the humanistic values of people's existence, on the other. In each of its three movements this struggle appears in its own manner, but the essence of the conflicting opposition is unified, which makes it possible to provide a summed characterization of such categorically juxtaposed figurative spheres.

The first of them is indubitably negative, according to its parameters, so it becomes possible to speak of its "tendentious" portrayal. That which was partially targeted in the previous Fifth Symphony (1944), and also presented in separate glints in Shostakovich's Ninth Symphony (1945), grows here into a real billow of animosity and aggression.

Such an impression is achieved as the result of the hyperbolism of expressive

means with the revealing of their brutal poster features:

- extremely massive, heavyweight texture;
- dry, abrupt harshly dissonant chord strokes of the orchestral mass;
- rough "hammering in" or menacing "inflating" of the sonorities;
- the harsh atmosphere in terms of the timbre with highlighting of the piercing phonics of high woodwind instruments and bombast of the low brass instruments, the latter frequently simulating veritable bellowing and "roaring."

This forceful charge frequently becomes endowed with the distinctive coloration of military music from the "clattering" rhythms of processions and marches, and even more so in the cases of incursions of battle depictions with the reflective intonations characteristic to them and menacing cries.

In the middle of the second movement the composer quotes an old army song "*Solovey, solovey ptashechka*" ["Nightingale, nightingale bird"] in an almost caricatured way, transforming it into the image of narrow-minded churlishness or army-like vigilantism.

The culminations of the symphony are univocally interpreted as depicting the din and gnash of suppression, which together with the commanding "edictal finger" negates any apprehensions of humaneness whatsoever.

In this guise, being undoubtedly hostile to human beings, repugnant in its depersonalized and distorted features, the monster of militant totalitarianism appears to us. An interfusion of imperial ambitiousness and pompous swaggering becomes distinctly perceptible in its likeness, while the wildish Scythian sound commotion portray features of the "Asian savagery" of eastern despotism.

In the context of such type of inspiration, the lyrical images of the Sixth Symphony are perceived as an element especially desired and precious. The leading antipode to the aggressive hostile mood is the subsidiary theme group of the first movement, the significance of which is emphasized by its reminiscence in the coda of the finale. Behind the despondency of this melodious music we sense the lurking of a wistful soul, showing the concentration of the humane attribute, which is answered by a soft sound-leading and warmth of timbres, frequently incorporating the accentuation of solo lines.

In the melancholy of the subsidiary theme group one can feel the nostalgia for peace and tranquility and in it, to express oneself with Pushkin's line "*one can hear something native*." What is meant by *native* is something genuinely Russian (in various different sections of the composition this melody reminds of pipe tunes), which naturally associates with the image of the native land and presents that vitally significant element which it is indispensable to preserve in oneself notwithstanding any outward collisions or impediments. The same kind of appetite also permeates the signification of the melodious lyrical epos of the second movement.

A different plane of humanity is offered by the main material of the finale. It has something directly in common with the thematicism in the analogous movement of the previous Fifth Symphony, composed during the end of the war. This is, once again, a festive scherzo depicting young life with its fervor, swift soaring qualities, playing mood and, as it is customary for late Prokofiev, asserted in sprightly "pioneer" tones. However, this time this restless run of "vivacious life" either strives to rush by on the side from the vigilant diktat from above, or it is compelled to struggle through the "wire roadblocks" set by the latter.

A strange ambivalence to the overall sound is provided by the textural background with reverberations of battle imagery constantly reminding of itself, with their rough clanking of "hooting" texture and with intoning brass instruments one-dimensional to the state of dullness (their laryngeal, strident timbres contrast harshly to the string instruments which contain the main thematicism). One can assume in this instance that the optimism asserted here was compelled to exist in the besiegement of the environment of surveillance and imperious hollo.

This was a particular "subtext," while, at the same time, the finale's coda already dots all the i's with the "text." The theme of the first movement's subsidiary theme group returns for a short period of time in a hazy elegiac mist. This is followed by a psychologically disquieting affluence of longing, restless anticipation and, finally, a truly deafening structural erosion on the endpoint of augmented sound. Thus is confirmed, impressively in its own manner, the indisputable domination of the suppressive force of the military fist personifying the heavy pressure of the governmental system of a command administrative structure.

It may be stated that to a certain extent the Sixth Symphony, as a dramatic epos about Russia and its troubled, hard times (not accidental is the condense, gloomy color of the key of E-flat minor), was created by Sergei Prokofiev predominantly from the position of the predominant antihuman powers, so to a certain degree he demonstrated himself as an adept of the official course of the state power.

Of course, it is not possible by any state apparatus to comprehend such elements in the content of non-programmatic instrumental music, and in 1948, which would be the year following the creation

of this composition, the regime would deal a rigorous blow to one who had seemed to be a “loyal” composer, one which sharply decreased the duration of his life on this earth.

It seemed to be ironic that the composer died on the same day as Joseph Stalin did. This was, indeed, a case of bitter irony, since the Stalin regime had wrought such a considerable amount of misfortune and grief on the composer. His final misfortune was connected particularly to his decease – during the days of “*great nationwide mourning*” for the dictator, hardly anybody was concerned with the funeral of the

outstanding composer occurring at the same time.

Alfred Schnittke made the attempt of recreating the timeline of Prokofiev’s burial: “Along an almost entirely empty street parallel to the bustling stream of the tragic-hysterical masses who mourned the death of Stalin, a small group of people was moving in the opposite direction, carrying on their shoulders the coffin of the greatest Russian composer of that time” [1, p. 32].

Among those few were composers Dmitri Shostakovich, Andrei Volkonsky, Karen Khachaturian, Alexei Nikolayev, Vladimir Rubin and Edison Denisov.

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About the author:

Alexander I. Demchenko, Dr.Sci. (Arts), Professor, Chief Research Associate of the Center for Comprehensive Art Studies, Saratov State L. V. Sobinov Conservatory (410031, Saratov, Russia), **ORCID: 0000-0003-4544-4791**, alexdem43@mail.ru

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Об авторе:

Демченко Александр Иванович, доктор искусствоведения, профессор, главный научный сотрудник Центра комплексных художественных исследований, Саратовская государственная консерватория имени Л. В. Собинова (410031, г. Саратов, Россия),
ORCID: 0000-0003-4544-4791, alexdem43@mail.ru

