

**Forging the ‘Lady’s Hammer’: A Profile of
Influence in the Life and Music of Galina Ustvolskaya**

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Thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements of the qualification of
PhD

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I, Rachel Claire Jeremiah-Foulds, declare that the work presented in this thesis is my own.

Signature.....Date.....

Abstract

The compositional oeuvre of Galina Ustvolskaya (1919-2006) was very largely unknown outside the Soviet Union before the state's collapse around 1991. There are still very few studies dedicated to her work in any language. This thesis' original contribution is to fill this critical void, presenting a detailed biography based on unpublished materials, addressing the philosophical and religious aesthetics of Ustvolskaya's music, and discussing the theoretical and technical issues involved in the music's creation.

The thesis will argue that Ustvolskaya was one of the most important composers to emerge in Soviet Russia after Shostakovich, and her music opened new dimensions for Russian music by cultivating an original style in the midst of cultural and political calamity. The striking drama of the music in her official catalogue does nothing but reinforce her reputation – long-present in Russia and now growing in the West – as an uncompromising composer who never failed to uphold her own individuality. Yet an examination of the tumultuous socio-political climate of Soviet Russia, and the ideological control that the authorities attempted to impose on Soviet artists during the period when Ustvolskaya was most active as a composer, conveys the near-impossible situation with which she was faced. Although some early works that were applauded by the regime were not included in her personal catalogue, this study scrutinises these works alongside that catalogue in order to achieve a deeper understanding of her entire compositional output.

By identifying the main artistic pursuits that were profoundly to influence Ustvolskaya's compositional output at its genesis, this thesis draws parallels between her life's work and other artistic traditions from both Russia and the West. An analytical approach that combines social, historical, theological and political factors with musical analysis here presents unexplored territories that enable a sound evaluation of the extra-musical content of Ustvolskaya's musical language. An understanding of these forces ultimately serves to locate her music in the wider context of her life and times, and aids a deeper comprehension of exactly how *The Lady's Hammer* was forged.

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Acknowledgments

First and foremost, I wish to extend my thanks to my original supervisor, the late Professor Alexander Ivashkin, for his unwavering help and support throughout my writing of most of this thesis. His genuine interest in this subject and belief in the direction I have taken, along with his unfailing encouragement and assistance, provided me with invaluable opportunities and insights that otherwise I would not have had. Sasha was a true inspiration. Everyone knew Sasha as internationally renowned cellist, a lively academic, a pioneer of Russian music in the West, and advocate of his students, but above all else, and certainly most importantly to me, Sasha was a thoroughly decent human being who was generous with his time and knowledge, and humble, unassuming and kind in temperament. It would be my privilege if this thesis could be considered, if only in a small way, part of his legacy.

Dr Fr Ivan Moody needs a special mention, as I will be forever grateful for the support he has shown to me throughout this process, but especially over the past eighteen months. Fr Ivan has gone far above and beyond any professional duty as supervisor to enable my submission. He has been incredibly generous with his time, advice and knowledge, believing in my subject despite difficult circumstances. I will be forever thankful to you, and could not imagine anyone more suited to taking the baton from Sasha.

It is necessary to thank all the staff at the Paul Sacher Stiftung, Basel for their generous support. Without the rigorous organisation and financial generosity of the foundation, this thesis would not have been possible. In particular I wish to thank Dr Heidy Zimmerman and Evelyne Diendorf for all their guidance. It is also necessary to thank the Paul Sacher Stiftung for granting permission to include several manuscript examples in this completed version.

I must extend further thanks to Galina Ustvol'skaya's widower, Konstantin Bagrenin, who has so kindly invited me into his home and offered access to numerous invaluable sources. His willingness to share with me such resources regarding his wife has granted access to a wealth of information. Sincere thanks are also to Andrei Bakhmin for help with several translation issues, aiding the communication between Mr Bagrenin and me, and the management of the website where a wealth of documents and photographs can be found. Mr Bakhmin has also generously allowed me to reproduce these photographs throughout this thesis.

Thanks are also due to Hans Sikorski (and, in particular, Hans-Ulrich Duffek) for permission to reproduce published musical examples. Likewise, thanks to Boosey and Hawkes for permission to reproduce several examples from published scores.

Thanks also go to Olga Digonskaya, Marina Rakhmanova, the late Boris Tishchenko, Olga Gladkova, Lyudmila Kovnatskaya, Natalia Frolova, Marina Petrovna, Frank Denyer, Peter Grahame Wolf and Elmer Schönberger, who have all spared their precious time to share with me their thoughts, first-hand experiences, memories and practical help. Also to Michael Mishra, Lydia Ader, Dorothea Redepenning, Swaze Hartog, José Voormans, Louis Blois and Lyudmila Kovnatskaya for their help in granting me access to rare scores and material for the project.

Fr Sergy Matsnev and Melitina Makarovskaya have provided me with access to a rich collection of znamenny raspev recordings, and shared with me insights into the Old Believer communities – sincere thanks are also due to them. I wish also to thank David Fanning for his guidance as to the Ustvol'skaya/Shostakovitch connection and to Emmanuel Utwiller at the Centre Chostakovitch, Paris. Also to Nina Zakharina for sharing her expertise in the field of Russian folk music and its connection to Orthodox Church Music.

I must extend my thanks to Nina Zhirovova who has aided me in the logistics of my various trips to Russia, and Natalia Frolova and Tatiana for their patience and help during my visits. Profound thanks also to Lewis Owens and the higher education and cultural consultancy EdmissionUK for a bursary that enabled me to embark upon my trip to Russia in April 2008. I would also like to thank Tom Perchard at Goldsmiths College for the support he has shown during the final stages of completing my dissertation.

Lastly, my thanks are most profoundly due to my family who have supported me both personally and practically throughout the writing of this thesis. Particularly, I wish to thank my mother and father, Joy and Murray Foulds, for sustained belief and unwavering practical help along the way when I have really needed it. I also must thank my grandparents, June and Leslie Sawyer, for all their help in its myriad forms. My gratitude also goes to my beautiful daughters Naomi and Hope, for all their patience and inspiration. My mum requires further thanks for all the childcare she has provided to allow me to complete my thesis (I cannot thank you enough), and my gratitude also goes to friend and neighbour Sarah Blane for the similar support she has shown. Finally, but most importantly, my enduring gratitude must go to my husband Mike Jeremiah, whose love, care, constance, belief, patience, insight, encouragement and support (not to mention computer skills!) cannot be overstated. He has been alongside me every step of the way, encouraging me to go on and smiling, believing where I doubted. Without him, this submission simply would not have happened.

Thank you.

Dedicated to the memory of Professor Alexander Ivashkin.

Transliteration Note

In the transliteration of Russian words and spellings, I have attempted to provide an English spelling that guides the English-speaker to the most manageable approximation of the Russian pronunciation, following no particular scientific rules. Where a spelling of has been widely adopted in the English language, it has been retained (examples include: Tchaikovsky, Scriabin, Musorgsky, Prokofiev etc.). Certain methods have, however, been imposed in order to aid pronunciation for English speakers. For example, the diphthong ай (that rhymes with bye – as in Nikolai) is presented as ‘ai’ to English speakers, (as the alternative ‘ay’ would naturally rhyme with ‘day’). The Cyrillic й is generally transliterated as ‘y’, and the vowels я and ю as ‘ya’ (as in Ustvol'skaya) and ‘yu’ respectively: ЫI has been transliterated as ‘y’. To adhere to the most common transliteration of the suffix –ский, I have retained the usual spelling –sky (as in Dostoevsky), and the suffix –оф as –ov (Rachmaninov). Hard and soft signs have been omitted. First names have been Anglicised regardless of nationality: (Maxim instead of Maksim and Alexander instead of Aleksandr). In any citation I have, however, strictly retained the author’s own transliteration preferences.

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An Introduction to Galina Ustvol'skaya

Chapter 1

1.1: Youth, Childhood and Education

The birth of composer Galina Ivanovna Ustvol'skaya in Petrograd on June 17th 1919 coincided with a turbulent era in Russia. The events leading up to the formation of the Soviet government occurred a mere nineteen months before her birth, in early November 1917. The tumult of the city in which she would spend her whole life is perhaps best illustrated by the fact that it was destined to change its name no fewer than three times during her life. It was in St Petersburg that Ustvol'skaya was to witness some of the major atrocities of twentieth-century politics and warfare.

Aside from the obvious political and social changes that ensued in the post-revolutionary events of 1917, this first year of Soviet government saw the transfer of control of all music schools (both public and private), the Petrograd Conservatory, the Petrograd State Orchestra, the music publishing houses, all instrument collections and music shops to the Council of People's Commissars. The nationalisation of these institutions forced a first wave of emigration among musicians. Yet, despite the financial distress amongst the majority of the proletariat, the Council of People's Commissars granted the Petrograd Conservatory 225,000 roubles, designed to demonstrate its commitment to culture and the arts.¹ What this gesture actually confirmed was the stringent control that Soviet officials were to assume over their musicians and the music they played. Sure enough, all musicians were soon called upon to partake in the education of their new audience: the common people at the clubs, factories and military academies of Petrograd. However, this initial enthusiasm for bringing music to the people was short-lived. From 1918 to 1920 Russia was engulfed in civil war, the Bolsheviks fighting against the White armies of Alexander Kolchak (1874–1920), Anton Deniken (1872–1947–) and Nikolai Yudenich (1862–1933). The army led by Lev Trotsky (1879–1940) emerged victorious

¹ David Haas, *Leningrad's Modernists: Studies in Composition and Musical Thought: 1917-1932* (New York, Washington DC and Baltimore: Peter Lang, 1998), pp. 1–106.

but at a tremendous cost. Petrograd had become a base for the Baltic fleet during the war and priority had been given to military personnel. As a result, disease and starvation tore through the city; by the end of the war, over half the population had been forced to leave Petrograd to find food.²

Ustvolskaya and her family, however, remained in Petrograd living in her first home, No. 11 Pirogova Street (formerly Maximilianovsky Street), with her mother Ksenya Kornilevna (schoolteacher, d. 1971), her father Ivan Mikhailovich (lawyer, d. 1944)³ and twin sister Tatiana (d. 1992). Ustvolskaya's childhood was spent between the family home, and their country *dacha*.⁴ Later in life Ustvolskaya was to claim that her lineage on her mother's side was aristocratic (although, as she would qualify, with limited means), and that her father's forebears were eminent members of the church – an ancestry that she would clearly identify with in her spiritual music of later years.⁵ Ustvolskaya's musical education began at the state-controlled State Academic Music Kapella of Petrograd, where she commenced her childhood studies as a cellist, although she always insisted she was a poor cellist: 'I played poorly...I would practice reluctantly, but when I played my half-deaf father...would sit by and listen. It touched me deeply.'⁶ Ustvolskaya's childhood was relatively affluent, although she came from an impoverished noble family and admitted that 'we did not have anything to spare'.⁷ She always had access to good musical education, which her parents encouraged.⁸ In journalist Olga Gladkova's monograph, Ustvolskaya herself recounted how, as a child, she was taken to the theatre for a performance of Tchaikovsky's *Eugene Onegin*, although she never got to see the end of the opera, as she was removed from the theatre because of the noisy tears she shed for Onegin.⁹ According the interview published on her official website, Ustvolskaya told Gladkova, 'My

² Haas, *ibid.*, p. 11.

³ Andre Dullaghan, *Galina Ustvolskaya: Her Heritage and her Voice* PhD Diss., City University, London, 2000, p. 1. This information was taken from an autobiographical note written by Ustvolskaya and preserved in the St Petersburg Composer's Union archive, dated 16.11.1983.

⁴ Dullaghan, *ibid.*.

⁵ Dullaghan, *ibid.*.

⁶ Galina Ustvolskaya, *Interview from 1998 with Olga Gladkova* <<http://ustvolskaya.org/eng/>> (accessed on 17/02/2015).

⁷ Ustvolskaya, *ibid.*.

⁸ Dullaghan, *op. cit.*, p.13.

⁹ Olga Gladkova, *Galina Ustvolskaya: muzyka kak navazhdeniye* [*Galina Ustvolskaya: Music as an Obsession*] (St Petersburg: Muzyka, 1999), p. 26.

mother complained that they couldn't take me anywhere because I would only disgrace them. I remember the orchestra impressed me so much that I proclaimed: "I want to be an orchestra."¹⁰

Illus. 1.1: Ustvolskaya's father, Ivan Mikhailovich Ustvolsky



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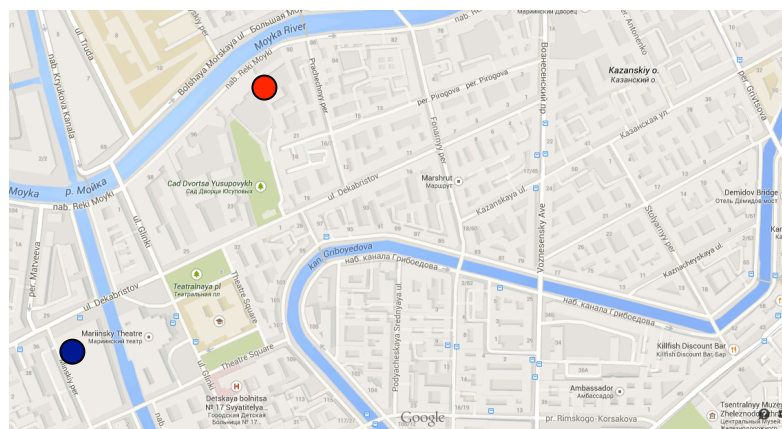
This image remains the property of Andrei Bakhmin, and is used with his kind permission. All reproduction and unauthorized copying is prohibited.

Ustvolskaya graduated from the Secondary Specialist Music School following a ten-year grammar school education, and pursued her musical education at the Rimsky-Korsakov Music College, attached to the State Conservatory (Fig.

¹⁰ Ustvolskaya, <<http://ustvolskaya.org/eng/>> (accessed on 17/02/2015).

1.2).¹¹ Upon completing two years' preparatory education there, Ustvol'skaya continued her studies at the conservatory in 1939 where she embarked on composition classes, first with Maximilian Osseyevich Steinberg (1883–1946),¹² Mikhail Fabianovich Gnessin (1883–1957)¹³ and later, most famously, with Dmitri Dmitrievich Shostakovich (1906–1975).¹⁴ Shostakovich made a notoriously difficult teacher, and made tough demands of his students. Once, Ustvol'skaya was assigned a task to study all of Beethoven's symphonies, sonatas and quartets: she was required to perform a full analysis as it was Shostakovich's approach that she must go through this in order to fulfil any later ambitions as a composer. Despite these demands, Ustvol'skaya struck up a particular friendship with her teacher that surpassed any conventional teacher/student affiliation and laid the foundations for a relationship that would impact on Ustvol'skaya and the reception of her work for the remainder of her life.

Fig. 1.2: Map of St Petersburg



The Rimsky-Korsakov College of Music ●

No. 11 Pirogova Street ●

¹¹ Igor Boldyrev (1912–1980), Iosif Dobry (b. 1905), Orest Evlakhov (1912–1973), Venyamin Fleishman (1913–1941), Moisei Katsnelson, Minasai Levyev, Yury Levitin (1912–1993), Abram Lobkovsky, Georgy Sviridov, Boris Tolmachev and Dmitri Tolstoy were the other members of Ustvol'skaya's graduating class 1939–1941. David Fanning, Laurel Fay ed., 'Shostakovich and his Pupils', *Shostakovich and his World* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2004), p. 277.

¹² Dullaghan, op. cit., p. 2.

¹³ Simon Bokman, trans. Irina Behrendt, *Variations on the Theme: Galina Ustvol'skaya* (Berlin: Verlag Ernst Kuhn, 2007), p. 8.

¹⁴ Bokman, *ibid.*, p. 47.

Ustvolskaya's undergraduate studies were interrupted by the horrors of the Second World War, during which she spent the longest period outside her home city, serving the war effort in a military hospital in Tikhvin,¹⁵ the administrative centre of the Tikhvinsky District, which is located on both banks of the Tikhvinka River in the Leningrad Oblast. The city was occupied by Nazi troops for one month during this time (November 8th 1941 until December 9th 1941). Counterattacks by Soviet troops meant that the occupation was significantly cut short, but many architectural treasures were destroyed during this time. Dullaghan supposes that because Tikhvin is merely two hundred kilometers from St Petersburg, it is possible that Ustvolskaya returned to Leningrad to continue her lessons with Shostakovich, yet details of this period are limited and many of the roads to Leningrad were blocked off during the siege, so it is impossible to assert either way. When Konstantin Bagrenin (Ustvolskaya's husband of forty years) was asked by the author for more details surrounding Ustvolskaya's war effort, he answered:

For about a year she was attached to a military hospital as a watch holding a rifle. She was saying the classical: 'Halt! Who Goes There?'. It was a difficult experience, of course, but I cannot tell how it influenced her music.¹⁶

Ustvolskaya's placement in Tikhvin was, however, perhaps something of an escape. In September 1941, Nazi Germany and co-belligerent Finland besieged Leningrad until January 1944, resulting in the deaths of more than a million civilians. The occupying army cut off nearly all supplies – the majority of these deaths were from starvation. Returning to a devastated Leningrad would, of course, have been a difficult experience, but Ustvolskaya returned to her studies and graduated from the conservatory with the highest of marks.¹⁷ Upon completion, she immediately joined Shostakovich's composition postgraduate

¹⁵ This information was taken from an autobiographical note written by Ustvolskaya and preserved in the St Petersburg Composer's Union archive, dated 16.11.1983.

¹⁶ Konstantin Bagrenin, via e-mail interview, translated and received via Andrei Bakhmin, 09/06/2010.

¹⁷ Dullaghan, *op. cit.*, Appendix 1, Figures 7–8. The building in which Ustvolskaya's apartment was was mainly occupied by musicians, many of whom were good friends with Ustvolskaya.

course, also at the conservatory. Ustvolskaya started teaching composition at the Rimsky-Korsakov Music College (where she herself had completed her preparatory course) and was fully inaugurated as a member of the Union of Soviet Composers in 1948.¹⁸ By 1950, Ustvolskaya's studies were complete.

1.2: Establishing an Independent Voice, 1950–1970

At the commencement of her professional career, Ustvolskaya left her mother and twin sister Tatiana in her childhood home and moved into a new apartment in Blagodatny Pereulok¹⁹ with her romantic partner Yury Balkashin (composer, 1923–1960).²⁰ Despite this romantic involvement, Ustvolskaya still maintained a close personal relationship with her former composition teacher, Shostakovich, throughout the 1950s (see Chapter 4). Ustvolskaya began to establish herself as a widely respected composer and teacher, with frequent premieres of her works. According to Ustvolskaya's recollections of these early days, her premieres were greeted by the musical audiences of the 60s and 70s with great interest and attention.²¹

¹⁸ Although Ustvolskaya was always a member of this organisation, she was never very happy with being so. In conversation with Boris Tishchenko, St Petersburg, 09/04/2008.

¹⁹ Dullaghan, *op. cit.*, p. 10.

²⁰ Balkashin also taught at the Conservatory. He had been a student of Boris A. Arapov and V. Voloshinov.

²¹ Ustvolskaya, <<http://ustvolskaya.org/eng/>> (accessed on 17/02/2015).

Illus. 1.3: Ustvol'skaya and A. Jansons in the Great Hall of the Leningrad Philharmonia²²



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Following the unexpected death of Balkashin (of an epileptic fit suffered at the composers' retreat of Repino) which roughly coincided with the death of his first wife, Shostakovich first proposed marriage to Ustvol'skaya who declined,²³ a move that threatened their previous camaraderie and gave rise to the notorious falling-out that would ensue. Ustvol'skaya continued to teach at the Rimsky-Korsakov College of Music until her retirement in 1975 where she, constantly maintaining that her motivation for teaching was purely financial, denied any effect she may have had on her pupils.²⁴ In Gladkova's monograph, Ustvol'skaya speaks about her teaching career directly:

²² This photograph is taken, with permission, from www.ustvol'skaya.org, although the website states that it has been taken from *Sovetskaya muzyka*, No. 10 (Moscow: Sovetsky kompozitor, 1966).

²³ Elizabeth Wilson, *Shostakovich: A Life Remembered* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006), p. 297.

²⁴ Marian Y. Lee, *Galina Ustvol'skaya: The Spiritual World of a Soviet Artist*, MA thesis, Peabody Conservatory of Music, 2002, p. 12.

I worked in the music college for a long time, about thirty years, but I only taught to sustain myself and I do not suppose that I trained dozens of famous composers. Those were trained at the conservatory.²⁵

Ustvol'skaya's words come as a surprise when one considers the value her students place on her as mentor and teacher. According to Boris Tishchenko (composer, 1939–2010), Ustvol'skaya was a competent and strict tutor, passionate about her educative position. In lessons, she was tough, frequently using vocabulary that cannot be printed here – a testament to her dedication as an impassioned and enthusiastic figure.²⁶ Former student and composer Simon Bokman is equally favourable towards Ustvol'skaya's skills as mentor, describing her as 'a brilliant teacher indeed':²⁷

When I began my composition studies with Galina Ivanovna Ustvol'skaya at the Rimsky-Korsakov College of Music, I did not realize how seriously it would affect my life. From my first meeting I sensed how unusual she was ... during those years she was my true Teacher [sic], the kind they call guru in India.²⁸

According to Bokman, Ustvol'skaya did not teach by any particular technique²⁹ (despite her having a full working knowledge of serialism, as taught to her by teachers such as Steinberg).³⁰ Ustvol'skaya disapproved strongly when her students composed like her³¹ and, as a result, did not teach her own individual compositional methods. She did not set conventional tasks such as homework: to Ustvol'skaya, the student would only fulfil their creative tasks successfully if they were also the initiator. She became personally involved with her students, providing them with her personal telephone number and inviting the most favoured to her St Petersburg home.³² Ustvol'skaya wrote letters of recommendation to conservatories on behalf of one of her students who did not do very well in his final exams, merely because she took pity on him. She

²⁵ Gladkova, *op. cit.*, p. 34.

²⁶ In conversation with Tishchenko, St Petersburg, 09/04/2008. Ustvol'skaya's protests that her motivation behind teaching was purely financial are increasingly dubious when the lack of financial incentive offered to a teacher in the Soviet Union is considered.

²⁷ Bokman, *op. cit.*, p. 21.

²⁸ Bokman, *ibid.*, p. 5.

²⁹ Bokman, *ibid.*, p. 6.

³⁰ Dullaghan, *op. cit.*, p. 3.

³¹ Bokman, *op. cit.*, p. 22.

³² Bokman, *ibid.*, p. 12.

always gave her students a lot of time: always on time for appointments (and notoriously disapproving of those who did not take punctuality seriously), Ustvolskaya did not leave the classes until all students' questions had been thoroughly addressed.³³ She encouraged her students to compose regularly and was fond of quoting Tchaikovsky who declared: 'a composer must compose music regularly, the way a shoemaker stitches his shoes'.³⁴ Ustvolskaya regarded traditional methodologies for teaching composition as 'hand-holding', and preferred to encourage her students to discover their compositional technique for themselves. In order for the students' own independent voice to emerge, Ustvolskaya believed that the students' own initiative was integral to the process.³⁵ As a teacher at the Rimsky-Korsakov College, rather than the conservatory, Ustvolskaya was not necessarily destined to teach students who were to go on to be world-renowned composers: many of her students simply took her course as one part of their elective for their general studies. Ustvolskaya was offered a position at the conservatory, but preferred to keep out of the limelight in this less ambitious position.³⁶

Although Ustvolskaya was never openly criticised or made an example of by the official regime in the same way as Shostakovich, she did have to wait several years – sometimes even decades – for performances and publications of her works, and was often criticised for her communication skills and unwillingness to cooperate.³⁷ Ustvolskaya was never outwardly accused of formalism by the authorities: although her music was dissonant, it was not dodecaphonic. However, she was often reprimanded for an unwillingness to communicate and criticised for her blinkered approach and inflexibility.³⁸ Despite Ustvolskaya having composed professionally for over twenty-five years, the VAAP (Soviet institution responsible for royalties) only printed an information booklet regarding Ustvolskaya in 1976, when she was already over fifty years old. According to Ustvolskaya's interview with Gladkova, it was not always an easy course: supposedly Ustvolskaya lost her job at the Rimsky-

³³ Bokman, *ibid.*, p. 29.

³⁴ Bokman, *ibid.*, p. 24.

³⁵ In conversation with Tishchenko, St Petersburg, 09/04/2008.

³⁶ Bokman, *op. cit.*, pp. 24–27.

³⁷ Lee, *op. cit.*, p. 31.

³⁸ Ian MacDonald, *Music Under Soviet Rule* <<http://www.suie.eku/aho/ust/ust.html>> (accessed on 06/06/2007).

Korsakov Music College as the authorities condemned her Piano Concerto for Strings and Timpani (1946). The story goes that Ustvol'skaya's students protested outside the college until their favourite teacher was restored to her former position.³⁹ This is a plausible story, as Ustvol'skaya's Piano Concerto obviously met with some resistance from the authorities: although it was composed in 1946, it had to wait for over twenty years before its publication in 1967.

Until the 1990s when the first documentation of her relationship with her composition teacher Shostakovich appeared in the West, it was virtually impossible to obtain any recording of Ustvol'skaya's music anywhere in the world and it was very rarely heard in concert. Throughout the twentieth century, her work was largely excluded from the mainstream repertoire in Russia: an inconvenience that was perhaps indebted to her stubborn character, which would have rendered her entirely unsuitable to a career in the Soviet music service. Added to which, in light of the political control to which she was subject, Ustvol'skaya's personal spiritual integrity would have been diametrically opposed to the ideological stance of the Communist authorities, making it personally extremely difficult for her to pursue a career as part of this system.

Yet Ustvol'skaya's music was never completely neglected: her music was performed in the Warsaw Autumn Festival in the late 1950s, and her Violin Sonata of 1952 was adopted as representative of Soviet modernism as it was performed to a visiting American delegation.⁴⁰ Amongst others, composers Roy Harris (composer, 1898–1979) and Samuel Barber (composer, 1910-1981) were present at the event, the former publicly recording his conclusion that the piece was 'kind of ugly'.⁴¹ According to Tishchenko, who was also present, Barber also publicly ridiculed Ustvol'skaya's music in the interval saying 'if this is minimalism, then I am all in favour of maximalism'.⁴² Nevertheless, it

³⁹ Bagrenin, <<http://ustvol'skaya.org/eng/>> (accessed on 13/05/2013).

⁴⁰ This work received standing a ovation from a Russian audience in the Small Philharmonic Hall on March 5th 1961. It received its first performance in Poland on September 20th 1962 at the 7th *Warsaw Festival*, an event Ustvol'skaya could not attend because of bureaucratic difficulties.

⁴¹ MacDonald, op. cit., (accessed on 06/06/2007).

⁴² The story was also recorded by Dullaghan who heard it through Sergy Banevich (composer b. 1941). Apparently Barber had heard Ustvol'skaya's cantata *Song of Praise*, a piece that had been subtitled *Poem of Peace*, at a later event. According to Banevich's memory, Barber was

was again brought out for official purposes to an audience headed by Igor Stravinsky (1882–1971), Robert Craft (b. 1923) and Nicolas Slonimsky (1894–1995) in 1962.⁴³ This anecdote was relayed to the author by Tishchenko with an intense annoyance, despite half a century having passed since the event. This once more testifies to the intensely high regard in which Ustvol'skaya is widely held by former pupils and colleagues.

Ustvol'skaya has commonly been regarded as retaining an uncompromising compositional integrity throughout her career, prompting Art Lange to claim in his CD liner notes of the recording by Reinbert de Leeuw (b. 1938) of the third of her ambiguously titled 'Compositions' that there is 'no evidence of Ustvol'skaya compromising with the Party line – she never stooped to writing secular cantatas or programmatically accessible music for theatre or films, or to use recognisable folk material in glibly popular ways'.⁴⁴ However, the reality was far more complex than these superficial observations state. In order to pursue a career in composition in the Soviet Union, Ustvol'skaya could not have maintained such an uncompromising stance. In reality, in order to survive, Ustvol'skaya had to come to some understanding with the state. This is where a largely neglected list of works comes into play that is more often than not completely ignored in the discourse surrounding her music. These more official works are contemplated by Boris Schwarz: while Ustvol'skaya's Violin Sonata was 'proof that modernism could survive and coexist with Soviet Realism' in reality, 'her dissonant writing was counterbalanced by some perfectly charming pieces in the best Socialist Realist tradition'.⁴⁵

What remains truly fascinating about this list is that following the fall of the Soviet Union, Ustvol'skaya reorganised her official catalogue by taking the extraordinary step — for the most part, successfully — of erasing these works from her personal history. Ustvol'skaya should not be judged too harshly for their completion, however, as every other Soviet composer had similar embarrassments to their name. These works were created in the very earliest part of her career when Ustvol'skaya was starting out as a composer and, most

reported to have said 'Let it be war, rather than such peace'. Dullaghan, op. cit., p. 8.

⁴³ MacDonald, op. cit., (accessed on 06/06/2007).

⁴⁴ Art Lange, CD liner notes: *Galina Ustvol'skaya: Reinbert de Leeuw, Vera Beths, Harmen de Boer*, hatART CD6115, Switzerland, 1992.

⁴⁵ Boris Schwarz, *Music and Musical Life in Soviet Russia* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1983), p. 404.

importantly, they are counterbalanced by her remaining output that were forced to wait over two decades for their premiere – music of uncompromising spiritual intensity that was anathema to the principles of socialist realism. Her Piano Concerto, for example, was written in 1946 and not published until 1967, and her First Piano Sonata written in 1947 waited until 1973 for publication, her Trio from 1949 until 1970 and her Second Sonata had to wait over twenty years before they reached the public domain. It is perhaps testament to Ustvol'skaya's inflexible character that she was categorically to forbid herself to engage with such compromises later in her life, to the extent that she even denied the existence of these earlier works.

Table 1.4: Work List and Style Categorisation

*Scores that were included in Ustvol'skaya's 1998 catalogue with Sikorski, but not in her catalogue of 1996.

** Piano Sonata No. 4 was originally published in 1957 under the title *Sonatina*: the only difference between the two versions is a small alteration in the last bar.

Date Written	Date Published	Date of Premiere	Personal Work (Early Style)	Personal Work (Mature Style)	Official Work (Not included in Sikorski Catalogue of 1990s)
1945	1971				String Quartet
1946	1967	Late 1967, Moscow	Piano Concerto for Strings and Timpani		
1946					Cello Sonata
1947	1973	20 th Feb 1974, Leningrad	1 st Piano Sonata		
1949	1969	26 th January 1967	2 nd Piano Sonata		
1949	1970	11 th January 1968	Trio		

1949	Unknown	1949, Leningrad			The Dream of Stepan Razin*
1949–50	1972	17 th Nov 1970, Leningrad	Octet		
1950	1960				The Young Pioneer's Suite
1950					Hail, Youth!
1951					Suite No. 3
1951					Sinfonietta
1951					Boldinsky Autumn (Film Score)
1952	1974	1958 performance for visiting delegates 5 th March 1961, Leningrad	Sonata for Violin and Piano		
1952	1958				Children's Suite
1952	1974	16 th Feb 1972, Moscow	3 rd Piano Sonata		
1952					A Man From the High Mountain
1952					Dawn Over the Fatherland
1953	1968	20 th March 1968, Leningrad	12 Preludes for Piano		
1954	1954				Russian Museums (Film Score)
1954	1954				Gogol (Film Score)
1955	1972	Spring 1966, Leningrad	Symphony No. 1		
1955					Suite for Orchestra*

1956	1956				The Girl and the Crocodile (Film Score)
1957	1971	4 th April 1973, Leningrad	4 th Piano Sonata**		
Unknown	1957				On the River
1958	1972	1958, Leningrad			Lights in the Steppes* (Symphonic Poem No. 1)
1958	1972				The Sport Suite
1959	1973	14 th Dec 1977, Leningrad	Grand Duet		
1959					The Hero's Exploit* (Symphonic Poem No. 2)
1961	1974				Song of Praise
1964	1977	23 rd May 1968, Leningrad		Duet for Violin and Piano	
1970–71	1976	19 th Feb 1975, Leningrad		Composition No. 1	
1972–73	1980	14 th Dec 1977, Leningrad		Composition No. 2	
1974–75	1978	14 th Dec 1977, Leningrad		Composition No. 3	
1979	1982	8 th Oct 1980, Leningrad		Symphony No. 2	
1983	1990	1 st Oct 1987, Leningrad 1995, Amsterdam		Symphony No. 3	
1985–87		24 th June 1988, Heidelberg		Symphony No. 4	
1986	1989	Unknown		5 th Piano Sonata	

1988	1989	Autumn 1988, Leningrad		6 th Piano Sonata	
1989–90		19 th January 1991, New York		Symphony No. 5	

1.3: A Hermitic Existence, 1970–1990

In the early 1970s, Ustvolskaya married a significantly younger pupil of hers, Konstantin Bagrenin,⁴⁶ with whom she was to reside for the remainder of her life. The couple moved to an apartment near to Park Pobedy, where they spent most of their lives together, with the exception of annual holidays to Lithuania.⁴⁷ Ustvolskaya feared the prospect of having to speak to strangers so greatly that she and her husband reportedly bought four tickets instead of two every time they went on holiday, so that they did not have to share their train compartment with anyone else.⁴⁸ Bagrenin was almost thirty years Ustvolskaya's junior and still lives in the apartment that they shared together. Bagrenin was, at the time, a jazz musician and composer, although in later years he has dedicated himself to promoting the music of his late wife. In 1975, Ustvolskaya terminated her teaching post at the Rimsky-Korsakov Music College to devote her time to composition. The early 1970s also saw Ustvolskaya strike up a professional association with pianist Oleg Malov (b. 1941), an association that was to last for two decades until a dispute resulted in the withdrawal of several dedications of her works to the pianist.⁴⁹ At around this time Ustvolskaya's mother died. Having no children of her own, this was to have a huge impact upon Ustvolskaya's emotional well-being. Her relationship with her twin sister continued and she adored her nephew (Mikhail Viktorov) although, as with so many of her other personal relationships, these

⁴⁶ In conversation with Bagrenin, St Petersburg, 09/04/2008.

⁴⁷ Bokman, *op. cit.*, p. 57.

⁴⁸ Bokman, *ibid.*

⁴⁹ In conversation with Tishchenko, St Petersburg, 09/04/2008.

bonds were not consistently stable.⁵⁰ Shortly after the death of her mother Ustvol'skaya met Mikhail Druskin (pianist and musicologist, 1905–91), who would later become her mentor.⁵¹ Having by now adopted a position of refusing to compromise with the state, these years were financially difficult: Ustvol'skaya's pension was small and with no other income there was very often little food in the house. Bokman has indicated that he and fellow students who used to frequent the Ustvol'skaya residence would, in these years, bring substantial gifts of bread and cheese, rather than the flowers they might have brought previously.⁵² Times were tough, and a fragile and nervous Ustvol'skaya often resorted to taking regular doses of valerian.⁵³

Illus. 1.5: Galina Ustvol'skaya, photograph taken by husband Konstantin Bagrenin, during a trip to Prienai, Lithuania, c. 1970



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⁵⁰ Bokman, *op. cit.*, p. 66.

⁵¹ Mikhail Druskin was the brother of Yakov Druskin (philosopher and theologian, 1902–1980) who was responsible for saving the archives of the repressed poets Alexander Vvedensky and Daniil Kharms, and also translated and edited the first Russian edition of Albert Schweitzer's book on Bach. Dullaghan, *op. cit.*, p. 9.

⁵² Bokman, *op. cit.*, p. 87.

⁵³ Dullaghan, *op. cit.*, p. 9.

From the mid-1960s Galina Ustvolskaya constantly – and very publicly – denied any influence upon her work, not least from Shostakovich. Following the supposed second proposal and romantic liaisons that arose around 1961, Ustvolskaya’s position on Shostakovich began to change dramatically.⁵⁴ By the time Elizabeth Wilson approached Ustvolskaya for an interview in 1994 for her biography of Shostakovich, Ustvolskaya outright refused to participate, leading to Thea Derks’s somewhat ironically titled article ‘Galina Ustvolskaya: *Sind Sie mir nicht böse!* (Very Nearly an Interview)’ – a brief, strained interview with Ustvolskaya and her publisher and confidant Viktor Suslin (composer, 1942–2012), which appeared later that year in *Tempo*.

The five-year gap between her Grand Duet (1959) and Duet for Violin and Piano (1964) saw Ustvolskaya complete only one other piece: her official composition *Songs of Praise* (1961), which she was later to remove from her official catalogue. Duet for Violin and Piano acted as a critical moment for the direction of her work and personal aesthetic, where she began the compositional pilgrimage that would preoccupy her for the remainder of her life. The work stripped away all the rhapsodic material that was present in her Violin and Piano Sonata of a decade earlier and introduced a severity – even brutality – that would define her music from here on. The ensuing six-year gap between the completion of Duet for Violin and Piano and the beginnings of her Composition trilogy, which occupied her from 1970–1975, saw Ustvolskaya digest the spiritual journey she had undertaken, before exploiting her new musical language to an even greater extent with these later works.

It is no coincidence that the intermission in her compositional output between her Grand Duet and Duet for Violin and Piano coincided with the beginnings of her notorious falling-out with Shostakovich and the professional distance she was attempting to establish between their music. Composed during this professional ‘rest’, the *Songs of Praise* was to be Ustvolskaya’s last ever official composition: an indication that it was also a profound time of change for her personally. The year 1961 marked a turning point for Ustvolskaya’s personal life too, as she took a step back from the limelight and

⁵⁴ Thea Derks, ‘Galina Ustvolskaya: “Sind Sie mir nicht böse!” (Very Nearly an Interview)’, *Tempo*, No. 193 (1995), pp. 31–33.

retreated into a secluded existence that would characterise the last forty-five years of her life and idiosyncratic musical output. By pursuing this hermitic existence, Ustvolskaya continued composing in the most unique and exceptional of circumstances over a number of years. Her self-imposed isolation from any other twentieth-century musical activity rendered her – to a large extent – untouchable, and permitted her the space to pursue her own individual, personal compositions. This ultimately saw the formation of her own distinctive voice.

By the 1980s, Ustvolskaya had truly distanced herself from much of the music she composed in the period before 1961 stating: ‘I only write when I am in a state of grace, then I let my work rest for a long time. When it comes, I reveal the composition. And if the time does not come, I simply destroy it. I never accept commissions to order’.⁵⁵ Furthermore, in the 1990s Ustvolskaya wrote to her Western publisher Hans Sikorski: ‘I would gladly write this work for your publishing firm but it depends on God not on me. If God gives me the opportunity to write something, I’ll do it immediately’.⁵⁶ According to Bagrenin, Ustvolskaya went to considerable lengths to track down her early works that had been completed ‘for money’ and did all she could to destroy all traces of their existence, as well as striving to exclude them from her catalogue.⁵⁷

As Ustvolskaya’s compositions are so inextricably linked with her spiritual ideas, it is of great importance at the outset to define ‘spirituality’ successfully by way of illuminating the intricate differences between religious, liturgical, sacred and spiritual music. It is necessary to highlight the Russian word ‘*dukhovnyi*’: the meaning of which incorporates both the concept of the ‘sacred’ and the ‘spiritual’. With this in mind, it would seem that spirituality is deeply embedded in Russian consciousness (as – in contrast – in the English language these concepts are expressed by two separate words). Ustvolskaya insisted that her own work was not religious in a ‘literal’ sense, but rather

⁵⁵ Frans C. Lemaire, *La Musique du Xxe siècle en Russie et dans les anciennes républiques soviétiques, Les chemins de la musique* (Paris: Fayard, 1994), p. 450.

⁵⁶ This letter was written to Hans-Ulrich Duffek at Hans Sikorski and is held in the Paul Sacher Stiftung, Basel (hereafter referred to as the PSS) and accessed by the author in November 2008.

⁵⁷ Bagrenin, *About the Composer* <<http://ustvolskaya.org/eng/>> (accessed on 15/02/2015).

surrounded by a ‘religious spirit’.⁵⁸ When questioned as to whether her music is religious, Ustvol'skaya replied, ‘This is a profound mistake. I have talked about it many times.’⁵⁹ Although this clearly does not acknowledge many of her non-spiritual published works before 1961, it does reveal the driving force behind many of works found in the second half of her catalogue as she began to draw solely upon her spirituality for inspiration. Indeed, the 1960s was the turning point for Ustvol'skaya in terms of her artistic choices and saw a subsequent flurry of compositional activity for the composer, where some of her strongest personal (and, beyond coincidence, most profoundly spiritual) music materialised. The 1970s saw the composition of Ustvol'skaya's Compositions Nos. 1, 2 and 3 and Symphony No. 2 (1979), her first symphony for nearly a quarter of a century, which paved the way for the advent of her final three in the subsequent decade.

1.4: Life After Music 1990–2006

Ustvol'skaya published no music that was written after 1990, although her widower insists that this was not because she did not write, merely that she did not consider the works completed during this decade worthy to be included in her catalogue.⁶⁰ The music Ustvol'skaya had completed prior to 1990, however, has been gathering prominence in the West commencing with performances in Holland as well as her winning a prize at the 8th International Festival in Heidelberg. In 1991, her music was presented in Switzerland as part of the World Music Days, in 1998 in the Vienna Festival of New Music and, more recently, as part of London's Shostakovich centenary celebrations in 2006. But this is not all: recent symposiums/festivals have been held in Amsterdam, Holland (2011); Centre for Russian Music, University of London (2008 and 2009); Zurich Conservatory, Switzerland (2008); Monday Evening Concert Series, Zipper Hall, Los Angeles (2009); Prom 26, Proms, Royal Albert Hall,

⁵⁸ Viktor Suslin, Valeria Stefanovna Tsenova ed., ‘The Music of Spiritual Independence’, *Ex-Oriente... I: Ten Composers from the USSR* (Berlin: Verlag Ernst Kuhn), p. 24.

⁵⁹ Ustvol'skaya, <<http://ustvol'skaya.org/eng/>> (accessed on 18/02/2015).

⁶⁰ Bagrenin, <<http://ustvol'skaya.org/eng/>> (accessed on 18/02/2015).

London (1999); Royal Academy of Music, London (1999); Huddersfield International Festival of Contemporary Music, Huddersfield (1999). In addition, a contemporary music ensemble from Zurich conservatory specialises in performances of her work. Ustvolskaya's music has long been established as a part of the standard repertoire at international concert halls, music schools and conservatoires, and has been researched in numerous doctoral dissertations throughout the world. The first performance of the Grand Duet in front of a live, international audience was at the 1986 *Wiener Festwochen*, Vienna; the Fourth Symphony was first performed at the Institute of Heidelberg in 1988 and performed once more at the Hamburg Festival of Women Composers later that year.⁶¹ Following Ustvolskaya's death in 2006, there has been a significant increase in attention directed towards her work prompting a heightened interest in, and concerts of, her music. Reflecting international interest in her work, several pages in the numerous publications regarding the life and music of Shostakovich have been devoted to Ustvolskaya's notorious professional and personal connection to the great composer although, regrettably, these monographs often lack the detail her music requires and focuses more on the personal relationship between the two composers. The PSS holds a research collection specifically dedicated to Ustvolskaya's music; the conservatory libraries of Moscow and St Petersburg, and the Moscow Composers' Union library, hold several of Ustvolskaya's scores that have never been published in the West following the composer's reorganisation of her catalogue. The recent creation of webpages devoted to Ustvolskaya on the internet and social networks is also helping to nurture interest in the life of the great composer. During the 1990s Ustvolskaya and her husband made several trips abroad, including two trips to Amsterdam in 1995 and 1996, to Vienna in 1998, and a last trip abroad to Bern in April 1998.⁶²

Despite this steady expansion onto the international music scene, Ustvolskaya's music still seems occasionally impenetrable, not least due to the composer's enigmatic existence, which rendered her self-sufficient in a form of internal exile. Ustvolskaya was, however, to attract several devoted followers

⁶¹ Frans C. Lemaire, CD notes: *Galina Ustvolskaya: Piano Sonatas*, Oleg Malov, Megadisc Classics, MDC 7876, St Petersburg, 1993.

⁶² Bagrenin, via e-mail, translated and received via Bakhmin, 09/06/2010.

to her cause, including musicologists/composers such as Suslin and Alexander Sanin, who often acted as her mouthpieces during these years. Following the premiere of Ustvolskaya's Symphony No. 5 (1989–90) in St Petersburg in 1991, musicologist Elmer Schönberger (b. 1950) went backstage to meet the composer and congratulate her on the performance. Here he met Sanin. Schönberger politely introduced himself and explained how he had come to 'know' Ustvolskaya's music and admire it greatly. Sanin simply replied that it was 'impossible to "know" genius'. Schönberger described Sanin as a 'Ustvolskaya's personal Rasputin': a figure who was wrapped up in the ecstasy of Ustvolskaya's persona and music. However, Sanin, in the same manner as many of Ustvolskaya's devoted followers, fell into disfavour with the composer, and their relationship was short-lived.⁶³

Throughout her lifetime, Ustvolskaya distanced herself from the St Petersburg composing community, refusing to attend concerts, choosing not to read extensively, accept commissions or explore the latest compositional trends or ideas. According to Gladkova she was often heard to repeat the ancient Greek saying 'Much knowledge is detrimental to the mind'.⁶⁴

In January 1995 Ustvolskaya and Bagrenin made a rare trip outside Russia to Amsterdam to attend a performance of her Symphony No. 3 (1983) played by the Concertgebouw Orchestra and conducted by Valerii Gergiev (b. 1953). Ustvolskaya retired from the hall before the performance of Shostakovich's Fourth Symphony, which was programmed in the same concert. This blinkeredness found in Ustvolskaya's professional life was also reflected in her personal life: Ustvolskaya was notorious for breaking off profound relationships that had sometimes lasted for decades. She withdrew dedications to performers, refused to be interviewed, photographed or videotaped, and harboured ethical values of unworldly standards. Before a scheduled performance of Ustvolskaya's music in a festival in Amsterdam in 1990, Schönberger telephoned Ustvolskaya from Leningrad to request an interview. Although she was very willing to provide information, she refused an interview saying that something terrible had happened in her life that meant

⁶³ In conversation with Elmer Schönberger, Amsterdam, 26/07/2010.

⁶⁴ In conversation with Olga Gladkova, St Petersburg, 08/04/2008.

that she was not able to give interviews.⁶⁵ She also instructed all musicologists not to make theoretical analysis of her work. Despite these comments, however, some of Ustvol'skaya's closest supporters and friends have published short articles and notes on the subject of her music with her full knowledge and without objection. Her widower granted me access to several articles that she had herself owned, including three documentaries about her life recorded for radio broadcast written by Gladkova. She was particularly fond of Tishchenko's comparison of her music with a black hole.⁶⁶ Ustvol'skaya's and her estate's acceptance (or, at the very least, lack of outright rejection) of a few of these commentaries lead us to the conclusion that it is perhaps not *whether* her music is written about, it is *how*.

Ustvol'skaya adopted a similar stance towards publishers, refusing to accept any modifications or 'improvements' to her work, pedantically picking over every detail in the published editions. None of the notes written in her spidery fair hand on the original autographs held at the PSS is open to performative interpretation: there are pages with individual dynamic and articulation markings on each note of each cluster (Ex. 1.6). Take, for example, the top line of this score, where there are two musical lines. Each note on the top musical line is marked with an individual *forte* sign (circled above the staff in red), the lower line includes *ppp* markings on each individual note. It is the same on each musical line.

⁶⁵ This is the only reason ever known to have been given by Ustvol'skaya to explain her refusals. In conversation with Schönberger, 26/07/2010.

⁶⁶ Bagrenin, <<http://ustvol'skaya.org/eng/>> (accessed on 05/11/2014). A 'black hole' is such a compact mass that nothing, including light, can escape.

Ex. 1.6: Manuscript Example: Symphony No. 2, p. 12

Handwritten musical score for Symphony No. 2, page 12. The score includes staves for 6 Flutes, 6 Oboes, 6 Bassoons, Trombones, Trumpets, C. T. (Corns), Piano, and Canto. It features extensive handwritten annotations, including circled measure numbers (35, 36, 37), dynamic markings (ppp, f), and performance instructions. A red arrow points from the Piano staff to the Canto staff. At the bottom, there are circled notes: "Ит. и Об. 5" and "6 Fl. to be prepared for 6 Fl. + 6 Ob." with the word "simile!" written next to it.

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Throughout her lifetime, no one could fully understand Ustvolskaya's lack of interest in everything else produced in the music world. Upon visiting Ustvolskaya's widower in St Petersburg, Bagrenin introduced the author to Ustvolskaya's 'two-minute rule': Ustvolskaya reportedly listened to only two minutes of every new composer she came across before making a life-long judgement of their work and – more often than not – discarding it.⁶⁷ Furthermore, upon wishing to dedicate a work to Ustvolskaya, Bokman received a letter from a 'middle man' on behalf of the composer stating that Ustvolskaya could not accept the dedication from anyone who was not her equal.⁶⁸ This attempt to disengage with the physical world around her also spilled over into her personal life: Tatiana Ustvolskaya died in St Petersburg in 1992, and Ustvolskaya, rather characteristically, did not attend her funeral.⁶⁹

Ustvolskaya's personality is here worthy of further consideration, as it saturates most existing musicological studies on her music and has attracted worldwide fascination. Ustvolskaya was not a highly eloquent speaker, preferring to keep her speech devoid of superfluous expressions.⁷⁰ Not being much of a socialite, Ustvolskaya even changed her birthday from June 17th to July 17th in order to avoid visitors and telephone calls (by July, she was already on holiday and did not have to bother with such engagements).⁷¹ However, a different side of Ustvolskaya's character has been conveyed by others. Bokman often portrays Ustvolskaya as a light-hearted individual with a great sense of humour:

I valued the opportunity to be around Galina Ivanovna very much and still think of my studies with her as the great luck of a lifetime. I loved talking with her. Forget talking, just being near her! I felt lucky if we were alone in the classroom and we could chat.⁷²

Telling her students the story of the publication of Piano Sonata No. 2 (1949), Ustvolskaya recalled how one of the publishing boards asked, 'Why crotchets? Aren't there other values available?' Ustvolskaya – publicly teasing herself –

⁶⁷ In conversation with Bagrenin, St Petersburg, 10/04/2008.

⁶⁸ Bokman, *op. cit.*, p. 69.

⁶⁹ According to Dullaghan, who has interviewed Ustvolskaya's nephew (Tatiana's son) Mikhail Viktorov, this was very difficult for the family to cope with. In June 1997, Viktorov and Galina Ustvolskaya were estranged as a consequence. Dullaghan, *op. cit.*, p. 12.

⁷⁰ Bokman, *op. cit.*, p. 23.

⁷¹ Bokman, *ibid.*, p. 56.

⁷² Bokman, *ibid.*, p. 9.

told of how another arose to defend her, saying: ‘I’ve known her for a long time. She is very skilled and can write not only crotchets, but quavers, and even semiquavers!’⁷³ Gladkova relates how Ustvol’skaya’s magnetic personality would – even as a pensioner – have attracted the attention of anyone in the vicinity.⁷⁴

Ustvol’skaya’s final symphonic farewell (her Symphony No. 5) was completed in 1990 (as a septuagenarian), and no other works were published during the final seventeen years of her life.⁷⁵ International music publisher Hans Sikorski announced Ustvol’skaya’s death, on December 23rd 2006, online two days later. Ustvol’skaya died of a heart attack that she suffered six days before her death and is now buried at the Lutheran Cemetery in St Petersburg. Her widower kept her room intact following her death and hopes to turn their apartment into a museum to commemorate Ustvol’skaya’s work.⁷⁶

For now, the website <www.ustvol’skaya.org> is organised and authorised by Ustvol’skaya’s widower, and enthusiast Andrei Bakhmin (programmer, musician, owner of Ustvol’skaya’s personal items, and confidant of Bagrenin). The website is a rich resource when it comes to photographs of Ustvol’skaya’s life, details of her catalogued works, and interviews and opinions that were condoned by Ustvol’skaya during her lifetime. There is a section on the website that concerns publications dedicated to Ustvol’skaya’s life and music, and answers any research that has been conducted into her work. Typically, these responses are rarely charitable towards musicologists if they do not agree with the firm line of the Ustvol’skaya estate. The website includes a statement referring to Bokman’s book: Simon Bokman’s *Variations on the Theme: Galina Ustvol’skaya* (Berlin: E. Kuhn, 2007), a valuable set of memoirs by a former student. It is not authorised by Ustvol’skaya’s heirs, and was published after her death: Bagrenin objects to the book and argues that it cannot serve as a reliable source of factual information about the composer.

Bagrenin certainly has a point: the book is littered with vague memoirs, hyperbole and editorial mistakes. Nevertheless, in the absence of literature on

⁷³ Paraphrased (due to inadequate translation) from Bokman, *ibid.*, p. 16.

⁷⁴ In conversation with Gladkova, St Petersburg, 07/04/2008.

⁷⁵ However, when questioned by Tishchenko as to what occupied the final years of her life Ustvol’skaya replied, ‘Composing, of course!’ In conversation with Tishchenko, 09/04/2008.

⁷⁶ In conversation with Bagrenin, St Petersburg, 10/04/2008.

Ustvol'skaya, Bokman's semi-autobiographical work has great value, as it documents memories of his teacher's personality over the course of three decades. Bokman succinctly conveys Ustvol'skaya's teaching methods, her compositional advice, her critical evaluation of other prominent composers and other personal idiosyncrasies, which are undoubtedly of immense value in terms of understanding the various motivations and influences that shaped Ustvol'skaya's music. Yet its value is rather limited in terms of musical analysis: although there are plenty of anecdotal accounts of Ustvol'skaya's personality, only a very slight portion of the text is devoted to her music.

It is clear that Bokman is personally motivated to propel Ustvol'skaya further onto the international platform and has attempted to do so by means of her notorious, uncompromising personality. It would seem, however, that Bokman's attempts to obtain such international recognition have, in turn, ultimately done Ustvol'skaya's music an intense disservice: this is the only publication in the English language that is solely dedicated to this composer and it rarely even mentions her music. As a result, *Variations on the Theme: Galina Ustvol'skaya* – although exceptionally interesting as an account of the unique character of the composer – is of limited use as a concise, credible musicological practice.

1.5: Catalogue Overview

Ustvol'skaya's official catalogue comprises twenty-one works, including five symphonies, six piano sonatas and a number of works for chamber groups. Commenting on her relatively small catalogue, Ustvol'skaya – who composed her works without the piano⁷⁷ – said: 'I don't believe in those who write 100...200...300 opuses, including Shostakovich. You cannot say anything new in these opuses'.⁷⁸ Although often labelled 'chamber works' Ustvol'skaya was

⁷⁷ In conversation with Bagrenin, St Petersburg, 10/04/2008.

⁷⁸ Letter from Ustvol'skaya dated 17/04/1994, entitled '*Moi mysli o tvorchestvye*' ['Thoughts About the Creative Process'] held at the PSS accessed by the author 10/10/2009.

adamant that none of her works were ‘chamber’ in the conventional sense of the word and that all her chamber works were implicitly orchestral in scale.⁷⁹

In the earliest years of her compositional career, Ustvol'skaya was an example of a composer surrounded by vibrant musical influences, as a professional figure on the St Petersburg musical scene. The political situation – unique to the Soviet Union – imposed restrictions and limitations upon her output that would have undoubtedly affected her compositions, and isolated the Soviet composing community from the rest of the world. On one hand, she was fast becoming a successful composer with obvious flair and ability yet, on the other hand, the political situation stunted her creativity and musical freedom. It was from this near-impossible situation Ustvol'skaya attempted to distance herself after 1961: in her desperation, Ustvol'skaya attempted to escape all cultural influences, as a form of political and creative protest. The only way to do that was to cut herself off from the musical community and pursue an isolated existence away from the concert hall. Ustvol'skaya's own words offer something of an explanation: ‘The best thing is loneliness, because in loneliness I find myself, and through this I can actually live.’⁸⁰

This absolutism is reflected in the pedantry with which Ustvol'skaya approached the performance of her music throughout her lifetime. Tishchenko related that prior to his performance of her Piano Sonata No. 5 (1986), Ustvol'skaya insisted he place his telephone receiver on the lid of the piano so that she could monitor and evaluate his interpretation before ‘allowing’ or ‘disallowing’ the performance.⁸¹ During her lifetime she cited Frank Denyer (pianist, composer b. 1943) and de Leeuw as the pianists she felt could play her work best.⁸² A statement, signed by Ustvol'skaya and published on her official website states:

...Never in my life and my whole career have I met an artist as great as Reinbert de Leeuw. He manifests deep inner understanding of my music and plays it truly and marvellously as no other musician can. Galina Ustvol'skaya, Composer 20.04.94.⁸³

⁷⁹ Ustvol'skaya, *ibid.*.

⁸⁰ Ustvol'skaya, <ustvol'skaya.org/eng> (accessed on 19/11/2010).

⁸¹ In conversation with Tishchenko, St Petersburg, 09/04/2008.

⁸² In conversation with Bagrenin, St Petersburg, 10/04/2008.

⁸³ Ustvol'skaya, <ustvol'skaya.org/eng> (accessed on 19/11/2014).

The performance directions outlined in her scores are frequently extensively detailed, including staged positions, costume and preferred locations for performances. In a musical sense, the dynamic range expressed is enormous, with directions such as *espressivo* placed individually over every repeated crotchet, sometimes for pages on end.⁸⁴ Although the difference between the first editions of her scores and the later ones are miniscule, Bagrenin repeatedly insisted that anyone must only use the later version, as this was how Ustvol'skaya fully intended the works to be.⁸⁵ The pedantry with which Ustvol'skaya viewed her published works can be seen in the published copies of several of her works held in the PSS and accessed by the author in October 2008. These first editions are marked in Ustvol'skaya's hand where the tiniest discrepancies between her original manuscripts and the published score are highlighted.

The reasons that some works that were included in her 1998 catalogue did not appear in her 1996 catalogue are unclear. A further oddity is that even in the 1998 list, some works are not catalogued under the name that they were published under. For example, *Ogni v stepi* (*Lights in the Steppes*, 1958) is catalogued more ambiguously as Symphonic Poem No. 1 and *The Hero's Exploit* (1959) as Symphonic Poem No. 2. In light of the limited number of pieces in her official catalogue, perhaps Ustvol'skaya was including these pieces to create the impression to the West that her compositional output was greater (in quantity) than it was in reality: these particular works were never published by Sikorski. It was perhaps Ustvol'skaya's intention to create the impression of a larger output without actually having to admit to these official embarrassments. Works that appear in the 1998, but not 1996, catalogue are, however, very different in style to other official works, such as *Children's Suite* (1952), where Ustvol'skaya somehow managed to drain her compositional personality in order to provide the authorities with their demands (see Chapter 6). *Lights in the Steppes*, *The Hero's Exploit* and *The Dream of Stepan Razin*

⁸⁴ Bagrenin warns firmly of Ustvol'skaya's disdain for several recordings of some of her works and insisted that if the author were to continue writing about her work, it was of paramount importance for her to only listen to certain interpretations. In conversation with Bagrenin, St Petersburg, 09/04/2008.

⁸⁵ Bagrenin, via e-mail, translated and received via Bakhmin, 09/04/2010.

(1949) are far closer to the lyrical music of her Piano Concerto, and so maybe more acceptable to include in the catalogue, but not acceptable enough for Ustvolskaya to publish in the West.

Ustvolskaya found it very difficult to speak about her own work but, speaking about her cataloguing choices, she wrote:

If my music is fated to stay around for some time then no standard musician will understand that my music is new in its meaning and content; it is uncomfortable for me to speak like this about myself, but I have decided to do it. I included in my 'Catalogue' my truly spiritual, non-religious works.⁸⁶

In Table 1.4, Ustvolskaya's works are broadly divided into two categories: those included in her Sikorski catalogue of 1996 (her personal works), and those not included in the catalogue (her more official works, which enabled her career to progress amid state control). However, her more personal works can be categorised into one of two further sub-categories, characterised by style. On the whole, the shift in style is temporal and, although there are vestiges of her early lyricism in many of her later pieces, as well as prophecies of her mature absolutism in her early works, (the shift in compositional style occurs in 1961, after the completion of *Grand Duet* in 1959).

So exactly what is it that is identifiable as Ustvolskaya's individual style? Certainly if the initial impressions of the discourse and myths surrounding Ustvolskaya are anything to go by, there are numerous ideological and musical factors involved in her music that render it indistinguishable. Understanding the nature of these factors and how they are manifested will contribute to a deeper comprehension of her work and its overall coherence in the context of twentieth-century Russia. This thesis will investigate each of the three groups of Ustvolskaya's compositions (as identified above — Personal Work: Early Style, Personal Work: Mature Style, Official Work) and provide a commentary of each of the works in the context of the various forces that shaped Ustvolskaya's oeuvre (political, biographical, social, philosophical, emotional, cultural etc.).

⁸⁶ Gladkova, op. cit., p. 3.

Widespread suppression of avant-garde musical activity in the isolationist Soviet Union followed Trotsky's expulsion from the Central Committee in 1927 as part of Stalin's rejection of western culture and 'bourgeois' principles. The establishment of the Association of Proletarian Musicians in 1923 and the resolutions of 1932 and 1948 that condemned the artistic direction of several high profile composers (see Chapter 6) meant that Russian music was intrinsically isolated from musical development elsewhere in Europe. There is, consequently, an undeniable 'difference' between the Russian tradition and musical development in the West. It is this issue of 'otherness' that Ustvolskaya's music can be used to investigate. By embracing the concept that certain characteristics are innate in certain groups, the author attempts to discern accurately the identity of Ustvolskaya's individual style amid an investigation into exactly what is the 'Russian Style' of the Soviet music community. The comparison of Ustvolskaya's music with that by certain comparable Western European composers is also a stipulation in order to validate her work succinctly within the context of western art music, and shed light as to whether the illumination of a unique situation reinforces the familiar myth that the classification of the 'Other' or the 'Outside' is the tacit equivalent of inferior.

Illus. 1.7: Ustvolskaya and Bagrenin's main living room, photo taken 10/04/2008



Illus. 1.8: Ustvolskaya's bedroom and study, photo taken 10/04/2008



A Cry in the Universe:
The Aesthetic Properties of Ustvol'skaya's Music

Chapter 2

2.1: Musical Style

In Ustvol'skaya's obituary in *The Musical Times* in 2007, Arnold Whittall states: 'if Cage's most radical achievement was to aestheticise non-music, Ustvol'skaya, seven years his junior, managed the more difficult task of de-aestheticising music itself'.⁸⁷ Certainly Ustvol'skaya's mature musical style from 1961 onwards (marked by the completion of her Duet for Violin and Piano in 1964) contains a certain sense of musical objectivity and a removal from conventional aesthetics, as she truncates the melodic lyricism and rhythmic variety that is found in her earlier works. Although the spiritual rhetoric with which she surrounded her mature style did not acknowledge many of her published works before 1961, it does reveal how, after 1964, Ustvol'skaya began to draw solely upon her spirituality for inspiration. This chapter aims to provide a synopsis of Ustvol'skaya's musical style in both her early and mature works (see Chapter 6 for her 'official' works), and investigates both the Russian and Western European aesthetics and influences that form the contextual backdrop to her music.

2.1.1: The Early Years

Many of Ustvol'skaya's earliest works are distinctly indebted to Shostakovich's lush melodicism, and include an elegant grace that rarely features in her later catalogue (see Chapter 4). Yet even in these early works, signs of the aggression found in Ustvol'skaya's later pieces can be identified. Her Trio (1949), written for piano, clarinet and violin, can be taken as an example.

⁸⁷ Arnold Whittall, 'In memoriam: Galina Ustvol'skaya', *The Musical Times*, Vol. 148 (2007), p. 2.

Although the hallmarks of her later style are present in this work, the aggressive, repetitive motifs are primarily melodic throughout. The work opens with a tuneful clarinet solo (marked *piano, dolce, espressivo*, Ex. 2.1), and is soon accompanied by a sparse bass line in the very lowest registers of the piano. The piano takes over the melody as the clarinet drops out, but retains the sense of pensive melodic development.

Ex. 2.1: Opening clarinet melody from Trio



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At figure 5, as the violin is introduced, the melody becomes more animated as it is (now marked *forte*) passed between the violin and piano. Throughout the movement the original, introspective clarinet theme is preserved but evolves into a frenzied, insistent petition as it gathers momentum. The end of the movement, however, returns to the stasis of the opening as the clarinet lingers on its final note, diminishing to nothing. The second movement retains this sense of stasis, as it is littered with pauses that break down any sense of constant pulsation. Yet, once more, the overriding feature of the second movement is the melodic fragment, again presented on the clarinet. Despite the general pauses and the variation in time signatures, the meandering clarinet melody keeps hold of its sense of regular phrasing. In sharp contrast to the motionless ending of the second movement, the crotchet pulsations of the third movement disrupt this stasis. The most famous of Ustvolskaya's melodies enters in figure 30 – melodious and lyrical – in the clarinet. It is a melody so striking and memorable that it would be used as a secret communication between Shostakovich and Ustvolskaya in the decades to come (see Chapter 4, Table 4.14).

Ustvol'skaya's early style can further be demonstrated by an inspection of her Piano Sonata No. 3 (1952). In contrast to Shostakovich's Preludes and Fugues (1950–51), which (similar to Bach) are wholly dependent upon the key of each movement, the opening to Ustvol'skaya's Piano Sonata No. 3 has no key signature and is harmonically stark and ambiguous throughout. Marked *piano*, this initial section peters out at *Tempo II* to a series of homophonic minor chords and pauses, the series of chords either repeated or subtly altered during each of its eight repeats. This clearly has its roots in the Bach chorale, although more tangibly it passes through the harmonic orbit of Shostakovich along its way.

Ex. 2.2: The first *Tempo II*: Piano Sonata No. 3

Tempo II ♩ = 46

The musical score consists of three systems of piano music. Each system has a treble clef staff on top and a bass clef staff on the bottom. The first system is marked with a piano (*p*) dynamic. Above the first system, the tempo is marked as **Tempo II** with a quarter note symbol followed by = 46. The first system shows a series of chords in the right hand and single notes in the left hand. The second and third systems continue this pattern with slight variations in the right-hand chords.

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The chorale gives way to a further contrasting section, which seizes material from the opening. Again, with no bar lines and saturated with a crotchet pulsation, the minor second is the overriding melodic characteristic of the *Tempo III*, although this time it has been inverted, and is heard as an ascending semitone. Quavers are found in the right hand, placed at irregular positions in the bar to reduce any sense of conventional bar construction. The result is an awkward, repeated yet irregular melody that seems to prophesy the hypnotic minimalism of Steve Reich (b. 1936), or even the player-piano works of Conlon Nancarrow (1912–1997) that would arise on a different continent, years later. The barren windings of this melody are interrupted by Ustvolskaya’s first suggestion of harmonic arrangement: a hint at a first inversion of a G minor seventh chord in the left hand (with an appoggiatura in the melody), marked *fff* (albeit with a G \flat and B \natural in the higher register to re-emphasise the minor second relationship found throughout).

Ex. 2.3: The first *Tempo III*: Piano Sonata No. 3

Tempo III ♩ = 112

The musical score consists of two staves. The top staff is in treble clef with a key signature of two flats (B-flat and E-flat) and a dynamic marking of 'f'. The bottom staff is in bass clef. The music consists of a continuous stream of notes with no bar lines, featuring a prominent minor second interval.

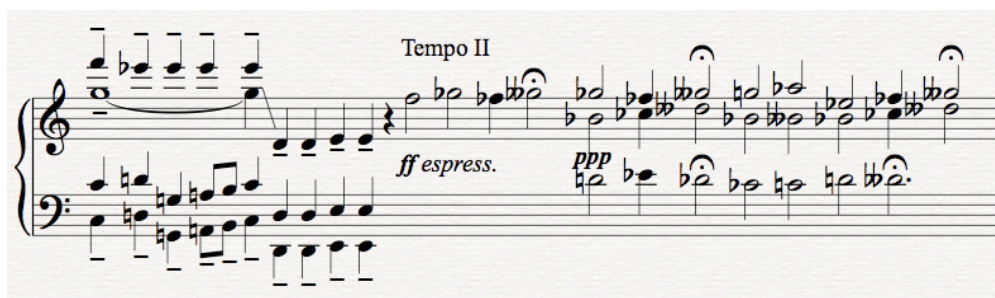
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In the following sections, Ustvolskaya combines all these opening ideas, thickening the texture as the work proceeds, discarding all sense of the childlike simplicity that previously gave it its character. The repetition that would define her later work has here become a key feature – the pianist is directed to play up to twenty repeated crotchet notes in the bass line, interrupted only on occasions by a note just a minor second higher. The bass

line also introduces another melodic cell, which becomes a further idiosyncrasy of the work: a descending fifth motif, played in octaves, most often found from a G \flat to a C \flat . The texture continues to thicken and the tessitura to broaden. The dynamics increase until its pinnacle is reached just before the *Tempo II, Meno Mosso*. Here, the dynamics are dramatically reduced to *ppp* and a sustained, chorale-like figure is established. Placed against this ceaseless backdrop are the punctuated marks of a repeated crotchet F, which continues (again, at irregular intervals) regardless of the harmonic colouring surrounding it.

At the *Tempo II* just before the final chorale, Ustvol'skaya dispenses with the thick texture that has accumulated beforehand, leaving behind an exposed four-note motif in the right hand without accompaniment. The notes F, G \flat , F \flat and G \flat are trumpeted (marked *ff espress.*) at the final climax of the piece (Ex. 2.4).

Ex. 2.4: Melodic motif from Piano Sonata No. 3 – Tempo II, introduction to concluding chorale



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Although not a direct quotation of Shostakovich's DSCH monogram, the motif's shape is undoubtedly indebted to Ustvol'skaya's teacher's melodic expression and could well be a reference to his compositional style. In both Ustvol'skaya's and Shostakovich's motif, the first interval is an ascending minor second; in Shostakovich's monogram, the next descending interval is a descending minor third, and Ustvol'skaya's a descending second; and Ustvol'skaya's final minor second interval, merely an inverted version of Shostakovich's descending interval. Although the close intervals in both serve

to convey an element of melancholy, Ustvolskaya's motif ends on a brighter note as a result of the inversion.

Despite this work's lack of key signature, this sonata is always notated with flat and natural accidentals, never sharps. This is taken to such an extreme that on occasions motifs are written using double- and even triple-flat signs (eg. E \flat , F \flat , G $\flat\flat$ and A $\flat\flat\flat$ – during the final *Tempo III*). This tendency to err on the lower side of each note emphasises the melancholic in Ustvolskaya's work, as well as providing the visual impression of chant-like procession. For example, had the example progression (E \flat , F \flat , G $\flat\flat$ and A $\flat\flat\flat$ from the final *Tempo III*) been written enharmonically (E \flat , E, F, F \sharp), it would no longer have the visual impression of the chant notation by Nikolai Uspensky (musicologist, ethnomusicologist, and grandson of one of Russia's Old Believers, 1900–1987).⁸⁸

The final work of these early years, her Grand Duet, marks the end of her first decade as a fully-fledged composer (she graduated in 1947). The overriding characteristic of this work is the compelling rhythmic force, which transcends the chamber music setting of the work, as Ustvolskaya pushes her metric experimentation to new heights. Both Grand Duet and the Octet (1949–50, from ten years previously) end inconclusively and juxtapose a kind of rhythmic and harmonic torment against elegant melodic lyricism evocative of her teacher. However, this lyricism is somewhat truncated as Grand Duet continues the dark, tragic journey upon which she embarked with her Piano Sonata No. 4 (1957). Enormous energy is required from both the pianist and the cellist as they battle through the first movement with their contrasting themes. Marked *fff* for the majority of the movement, both instruments alternate between a ferocious, hammering quaver motif, and loud, accented, sustained notes. The accented, trilling sigh in the cello that characterises the second movement creates very difficult listening in the absence of any melody at all. Ustvolskaya's instruction that the cellist must use a double bass bow to play the third movement distances the work from any sense of chamber music, disassociating it further from Shostakovich's compositions. With this work

⁸⁸ See Chapter 5 for a more thorough examination of the connection between Ustvolskaya's music and Uspensky's transcription of the *znamenny raspev*.

The prevailing tragedy that was beginning to take centre stage can be easily traced to Shostakovich's compositional *raison d'être*. Indeed, Michael Mishra quite rightly asserts that the ominous threat of Shostakovich's First Symphony (1924–1925) provided a 'triumphant assimilation of Western European trends and the Russian classics, an irresistible model for other Soviet composers to emulate'.⁸⁹ Musically speaking, there is an undeniable influence in Ustvolskaya's early works emanating from her composition teacher. But perhaps Shostakovich defines even these works from the end of the 1950s, which, on the surface, appear more isolated and increasingly free from his orbit. By the time she had completed her Sonata for Violin and Piano (1952), Piano Sonata No. 3 and Twelve Preludes for Piano (1953), Ustvolskaya was escaping from the style of her teacher to an even greater extent. The early 1950s saw the process of 'emptying out' Shostakovich's music and the genesis of Ustvolskaya's own individual voice.

2.1.2: Mature Style

In 1964, Ustvolskaya completed Duet for Violin and Piano, a work that terminated all palpable connection with her former teacher's compositions. This piece stripped away all the rhapsodic melodic material that was present in her Violin and Piano Sonata of a decade earlier (a work that easily lends itself to direct comparison due to the instrumental similarities). The duet introduces a severity – even brutality – that would characterise her music from here on. Free from both time signature and key signature, Ustvolskaya gave herself a blank canvas on which to work, removing all vestiges of conventional canonic writing. The dark intensity of the piece conveys the beginnings of Ustvolskaya's apocalyptic view and later preoccupation with what she saw as the hopeless state of humankind. Throughout the work, the violin and piano usually interact in contrasting musical lines, which rarely achieve any sense of

⁸⁹ Michael Mishra, *A Shostakovich Companion* (Westport, Conn., London: Praeger, 2008), pp. 485–486.

peaceful concord. Even in the sections where the two instruments cooperate, Ustvolskaya never permitted total unison. Take, for example, figure 68, where both the violin and piano play a sustained, homophonic motif, marked *piano*. On the surface, this benevolent section provides a well-needed retreat from the thunderous clusters preceding it. Yet whilst the piano rests on octave F naturals, the violin lands on an octave G \flat . This lends a very eerie aura to an otherwise serene section and emphasises the relentless tension that is found elsewhere in the work. A further characteristic of the whole work is an accented, sustained scream on high E in the violin part (figures 40–45), which is often juxtaposed against repetitive, motorised figures in the bass of the piano.

Ex. 2.6: Duet for Violin and Piano, figures 40–45

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The genesis of Ustvolskaya’s mature style coincided with her curtailment of the influence from the Leningrad Conservatory, her quarrelling with Shostakovich, the end of writing official works and a quiet decade of compositional activity. Lemaire describes the 1960s as a ‘period of mourning and silence’⁹⁰ as she only completed one personal work in the 1960s, but this is hotly disputed by Bagrenin, who insists that Ustvolskaya was extremely active during this time. He concedes that it was a period of ‘silence’ in the sense that

⁹⁰ Frans C. Lemaire, *A Singular and Uncommon Fate* <<http://ustvolskaya.org/eng/>> (accessed on 06/07/2015).

she was not satisfied with any work she completed during this decade but, anyway, '[the silent period] didn't last long and did not dramatically affect her ability to compose'.⁹¹

The 1950s saw Ustvolskaya withdraw from the composers' circles in St Petersburg to her small apartment. This could well have been on account of a wave of arrests, fear and cultural pressure in the USSR at the end of the 1940s: the year when Stalin celebrated his 70th birthday (1949) saw composers of international significance utterly humiliated in the Soviet press, following The Central Committee's decree in 1948 that condemned all formalism in music and music that was 'inimical to the people'.⁹² As she witnessed first-hand the creative struggle of those around her, Ustvolskaya started her journey of introspection here as she completed her Second Piano Sonata, one of her first deeply spiritual works. This work lends itself very easily to a comparison with her earlier piano sonata and, in contrast, is so full of despair and furious protest that it significantly prophesies the stylistic change that occurred from 1961.

What, then, are the characteristics of this famous 'mature style'? The distinctive nature of Ustvolskaya's later music was to shape largely the way in which Western audiences have chosen to define her music, and the rhetoric surrounding it. Ustvolskaya's obituary in *The Independent* describes her later scoring as 'eccentric' and continues:

With these unusual combinations of timbre came extremes of register (her dynamic markings range from *ppppp* to *fffff*), abrupt shifts in texture and mood, from a motionless contemplation focused on a single note or hypnotically rocking semi-tonal oscillation to violent and dense outbursts of rage.⁹³

The obituary in *The New York Times* describes Ustvolskaya's works as 'forceful' and proceeds to say:

⁹¹ Bagrenin, <<http://ustvolskaya.org/eng/>> (accessed on 07/11/2010).

⁹² Marina Frolova-Walker, Jonathan Walker, *Newly Translated Source Documents*, programme booklet for *Music and Dictatorship: Russia Under Stalin: A Symposium*, Weill Recital Hall, New York City, Carnegie Hall (22/02/2003), pp. 10–15.

⁹³ Martin Anderson, 'Galina Ustvolskaya: Shostakovich's Musical Conscience', *The Independent*, 27 December 2006, written in the wake of the composer's death.

Her language is essentially tonal, if acid-tinged, and full of appealingly angular themes. Yet there is also a fury in her music that finds expression in solid, dissonant chords that are usually sharply articulated and repeated several times to create a violently passionate effect.⁹⁴

The English translation of Ustvol'skaya's official website, the first port of call for many Westerners interested in her music, states:

Ustvol'skaya's music is unique and does not resemble any other. It is exceedingly expressive, high-spirited, austere and full of tragic pathos attained with modest expressive means. Ustvol'skaya's musical thought is distinguished by its intellectual power, while a keen spirituality occupies the core of her work. Her music is built on simple and logical principles, original and natural.⁹⁵

All these reviews are testament to the fascination with which Ustvol'skaya is viewed in the West. Much of that fascination is down to the startlingly brutal musical vocabulary that she includes in these later works. By breaking down the musical conventions she had been taught, Ustvol'skaya independently dissolved the language of music itself. Take, for example, her penchant for a crotchet pulse throughout so many of her works. By relentlessly restating a minimal crotchet beat, Ustvol'skaya detaches herself from the lyrical melodies in her early works (in the orbit of Shostakovich) but at the same time de-aestheticises music itself by removing any sense of a subjective rhythm. Oxymoronically, Ustvol'skaya does this by restating an insistent crotchet beat. As Tishchenko put it: '[Ustvol'skaya achieves] the maximum expression using the minimum of resources.'⁹⁶ The result of this rhythmic void is rhythmic pressure – the inexorability of her rhythmic constructs even reflect the unstoppable metronome broadcast to the civilians of St Petersburg during the Leningrad blockade. The constant beating evident in so many of Ustvol'skaya's works induce these same notions of humanitarian survival: her music

⁹⁴ Allan Kozinn, *Galina Ustvol'skaya, 87, Forceful Russian Composer Dies* <http://www.nytimes.com/2006/12/29/arts/music/29ustvol'skaya.html?_r=0> (accessed on 14/04/2015).

⁹⁵ Bagrenin, <<http://ustvol'skaya.org/eng/>> (accessed on 12/05/2010).

⁹⁶ Boris Tishchenko, '*V vechnom poiske istiny: Galina Ustvol'skaya*' ['In the Eternal Search of Truth'], *Muzyka v SSSR [Music in the USSR]*, April–June, 1990, pp. 21–22.

transcends the physical realm by elevating Man's existence to a spiritual sphere where endurance can only be found from God.

Ustvol'skaya's later works have no conventional sense of structure and no symmetrical constructions. The dynamics are famously aggressive, with sudden, violent shifts between dynamic markings. According to Ustvol'skaya's preferred performer of her music Denyer, it was essential to have a piano tuner on hand throughout the recording process of Ustvol'skaya's full piano works, as the piano would frequently go out of tune because of these violent dynamics. Denyer also recalled how he wrecked his own personal piano beyond repair through practicing these pieces.⁹⁷ The melody often consists of the repetition of short (three or four note) motifs. As a result of such emphasis on temporality and repetition, the harmony and tonality is non-standard, often consisting of clustered dissonances and thick textures. Frequently the pianist is directed to play clusters with his/her fist, the side of the hand or, indeed, the whole of the forearm in order to achieve Ustvol'skaya's sense of violence and static energy.

Composition No. 1 *'Dona Nobis Pacem'* (1970–1971) is written for piccolo, tuba and piano: an unusual combination of instruments that gives rise to unconventional sonorities. The piccolo and the tuba ordinarily have very little to do with chamber music: usually found as orchestral instruments, their usual purpose is to add colour to a large orchestral sound. This combination of instruments therefore not only removes the piece from the *orchestral* tradition but also the *chamber* tradition. Ustvol'skaya strips away any conventional aspects of the musical vocabulary from the historical canon to ensure her work stands alone. Bearing in mind the spiritual subject of this work, Ustvol'skaya's official website dares to ask whether the 'spontaneous mirth' provoked by this circus-like instrumental combination equates to blasphemy by the composer.⁹⁸

Of course, it is difficult to ascertain exactly what constitutes a spiritual quality in music. In *Quartet for the End of Time* (1941) by Olivier Messiaen (1908–1992), for example, there is no overt religious theme. Instead, an affinity with nature initially seems to preside over a connection with the heavenly realms. Yet there is plenty of evidence that the Quartet is a spiritual work, especially when one considers that two of the titles of the eight

⁹⁷ In conversation with Frank Denyer, Torquay, 14/04/2009.

⁹⁸ Bagrenin, <<http://ustvol'skaya.org/eng/>> (accessed on 06/06/2010).

movements refer directly to Jesus Christ. Furthermore, one cannot escape the context in which it was written: when Messiaen was held in Stalag VIII-A in Görlitz, a prisoner of war camp. This, of course, has extreme spiritual significance, with overtones of impending death, judgement and evil. In Messiaen's case, the unusual instrumentation is indebted to his fellow musician inmates: a violinist, cellist and clarinetist (Messiaen later added seven more movements and a piano part). Yet this curious array of instruments has further spiritual resonance as it breaks away from the cultural traditions of Man. This *extreme* combination of instruments was employed at an *extreme* time to convey *extreme* emotions, and the result is a heightened communication with God. This overriding sense of spirituality is also reflected in the temporal organisation of the work: *Quartet for the End of Time* is only fifty minutes long, yet the fifth and final movements in particular are enormously slow, and a sensation of a regularly weighted beat is avoided, separating rhythm from metre, resulting in a feeling of timelessness and separation from the world.

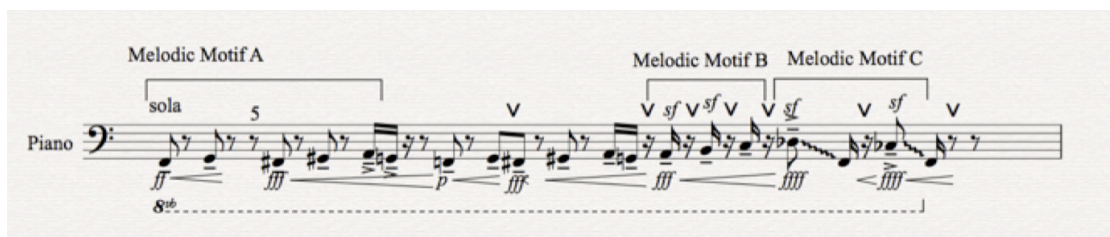
This brief description of the spiritual elements of Messiaen's influential work is clearly also applicable to Ustvolskaya's composition. Ustvolskaya, too, selects unusual combinations of instruments to convey unearthly sentiments. She, too, is preoccupied with themes of judgement, evil and death. Her temporal organisation is a technique also employed by Ustvolskaya in her *Grand Duet* to similar effect: the first four movements of the piece range between two and three minutes, contrasting with the final movement at over ten minutes long. Manipulation of linear time becomes a compelling tool to represent the spiritual and, in Ustvolskaya's case, the eternal significance of sin.

Number symbolism reminiscent of Messiaen is also evident in Ustvolskaya's work: the eight double basses in her *Composition No. 2 'Dies Irae'* (1972–1973), for example, correspond to the seven days of creation, with the addition of an eighth conveying eternity. This is directly comparable to the number of movements found in Messiaen's *Quartet*. However, whereas Messiaen clearly stated the extra-musical intention of his music: '[to shed] light on the theological truths of the Catholic Faith'⁹⁹ Ustvolskaya fiercely

⁹⁹ Unknown author, <<http://surfinthespirit.com/music/end-of-time.html>> (accessed on

denied evidence of number symbolism.¹⁰⁰ There is, however, undeniable constant numerical symbolism saturating the internal content of each of Ustvolskaya's pieces forming the trilogy of *Compositions* too. The melodic motifs in Composition No. 1 are: 1) F, G/F#, G#, A, 2) A, B, C, and 3) D♭, C♭ (Ex. 2.7). These short motifs – consisting of four, three or two notes – are all varied through transposition, inversion etc. They ultimately provide the entire basis for the total work (the emphasis of the musical material is on the melodic nature of these brief cells rather than any harmonic function).

Ex. 2.7: Melodic motifs in Composition No. 1, 'Dona Nobis Pacem'



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By examining other spiritual works contemporary with Ustvolskaya (such as *Quartet*), an exploration of the musical language employed to convey these extra-musical ideas can be achieved. In the case of Messiaen, spirituality and religion is aptly conveyed by extreme musical language. By breaking away from conventional music idioms, a composer breaks from the restrictions imposed by man-made musical tradition. An innovation of musical language equips a composer with tools to communicate objects beyond the physical. It is by using this approach that a sound decryption of Ustvolskaya's obsessively spiritual music can be achieved.

With the exception of Piano Sonatas Nos. 5 and 6 (1988), every one of Ustvolskaya's works subsequent to 1970 includes a religious subtitle, despite their varied genres. These Latin titles of *Composition Nos. 1, 2 and 3 – Dona*

31/07/2005).

¹⁰⁰ Ustvolskaya, telephone interview by Lee, St Petersburg, Russia, 20/04/2000. Lee, op. cit., p. 44.

Nobis Pacem, Dies Irae and *Benedictus Qui Venit* – are not taken from the Orthodox Church, but the Western Catholic Church, as a protest against the corruption so apparent in the Orthodox Church.¹⁰¹ These three works were originally published in the Soviet Union without their sacred subtitles¹⁰² and form a mini-cycle, ideologically linked by both their spiritual subject and their musical material. Ustvolskaya, although avidly spiritual, did not belong to any particular religious denomination,¹⁰³ but her embracing of aspects of Russian Orthodoxy is juxtaposed with the Catholic subtitles of her Compositions Nos. 1, 2, and 3. In a country where the national religious institution had been appropriated and consequently corrupted by the Soviet regime, her incorporation of these texts can be perceived as her personal rejection of Russian Orthodoxy as a state religion, as well as a protest against the corruption so apparent in the Church. It must be noted, however, that her rejection of the Church is not absolute as – seemingly paradoxically – she stated her predominantly spiritual compositions ‘are best suited to performance in a church’.¹⁰⁴

Symphony No. 3 ‘*Jesus Messiah, Save us!*’ is scored for an orchestra of five oboes, five trumpets, five double basses, three tubas, trombone, percussion group and piano. It also features a narrator who – according to the score notes – should be a ‘young man [and] should wear a black shirt and black trousers, and should make use of a microphone’. This inconspicuous dress removes any sense of the narrator’s personal elevation as a singer: Ustvolskaya is constantly returning the focus to God. The narrator is directed to ‘address his prayer to God with great fervour’. Ustvolskaya became acquainted with the text of the symphony through a book entitled *Pamyatniki srednevekovoy latinskoj literatury X–XII vekov* [Monuments of Mediaeval Latin Literature from the 10th to the 12th Centuries], translated from Latin to Russian. Her affinity with the invalid, German Benedictine monk Hermannus Contractus (1013–1054) was the source and inspiration of all three symphonies that are dedicated to the concept of the trinity. According to the score, this text is borrowed from

¹⁰¹ Lee, *ibid.*, pp. 44–45.

¹⁰² Sharon Wettstein, *Surviving the Soviet Era: An Analysis of Works by Shostakovich, Schnittke, Denisov and Ustvolskaya*, DMA, University of California, San Diego, 2000, p. 68.

¹⁰³ Lee, *op. cit.*, p. 42.

¹⁰⁴ Viktor Suslin, trans. Alfred Clayton, ‘Preface’, *Galina Ustvolskaya: Catalogue* (Hamburg: Sikorski Verlag, 1990), p. 4.

Hermannus Contractus; however, the first four lines of the text are almost an exact translation from the Orthodox Prayer Book. The text of the Symphony is as follows:

<i>Bozhe krepy,</i>	Almighty God,
<i>Gospodi istinny,</i>	True God,
<i>Otche veka gradushcheva,</i>	Father of eternal life,
<i>Mira tvorche,</i>	Creator of the world,
<i>Isuse Messiya,</i>	Jesus Messiah,
<i>Spasi nas!</i>	Save us! ¹⁰⁵

The text to Ustvolskaya's Symphony No. 5 is that of the Lord's Prayer, a prayer that gave Ustvolskaya constant inspiration for all her life.¹⁰⁶ It therefore seems apt that it was this text that was used for her last symphony – her definitive symphonic comment. The work is littered with *espressivissimo!* and *fervido!* indications. As the cantor recites 'and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil', the percussion utters a low ominous roll and the perceived crotchet pulsation is transformed to a slower, minim beat, reinforcing the threatening intensity of the text. Alexander Ivashkin addresses the importance of text as he asserts that a further characteristic of Russian art is the way in which it hauls the viewer in as a participant. He offers the fact that Russian folk tradition was always oral by way of explanation for this unique feature, in contrast to the Western emphasis placed on written text.¹⁰⁷ This, as will be subsequently scrutinised (Chapter 5), is the crucial essence behind Ustvolskaya's work, both in a musical and a philosophical sense. Aside from the setting, which clearly places the text as the basis for all vocal lines, Ustvolskaya's protagonists are not merely articulating their character's longing for redemption – or even Ustvolskaya's own sufferings and aspirations – their

¹⁰⁵ Galina Ustvolskaya, *Symphony No. 3*, Exempla Nova 163 (Hamburg: Hans Sikorski), p. 2.

¹⁰⁶ Lee, op. cit, p. 42.

¹⁰⁷ In the traditions of the Orthodox Church, this can be seen only too well, where the melodic shapes of the chant are entirely dependent upon the text, thus permitting its meaning to prevail. Alexander Ivashkin, 'The Paradox of Russian Non-Liberty', *The Musical Quarterly*, Vol. 76, No. 4, (Winter, 1992), p. 548.

role is to plead for the entirety of humankind. The emphasis that Ustvolskaya consigns to performance conditions plainly conveys her intention that the music is not only a replication of the score but an *experience* – both visually and aurally – for all concerned.

MacDonald describes Ustvolskaya's music as a late twentieth-century version of the musical voice of Heinrich Schütz (1585–1672), a voice that echoed a catastrophe-wrecked seventeenth-century Protestant Europe.¹⁰⁸ This reinforces Suslin's assertions that Ustvolskaya's work is at once temporal and spiritual and that the spiritual aspect of her work has been definitively conditioned by her life in Soviet society: 'Music such as hers', he told Derks, 'could only develop in that place, at that time. In this century, St Petersburg witnessed numerous horrors, of which the siege in the Second World War was only one'.¹⁰⁹ This begins to touch upon a rather contradictory image. The violently reiterated percussive beats of the *Dies Irae*, for example, seem to be less a call to judgement (as the title of the composition suggests) than a merciless beating into submission: the percussive part for a wooden box perhaps itself functioning as the very epitome of physicality. In short, the brutal aspect of Ustvolskaya's music can seem incompatible with its message of redemption (Ex. 2.8).

¹⁰⁸ MacDonald, op. cit., (accessed on 12/01/2008).

¹⁰⁹ Derks, op. cit., p. 33.

Ex. 2.8: 'Beating into Submission' – Composition No. 2, 'Dies Irae'

The image shows a musical score for 'Beating into Submission' from 'Dies Irae'. The score is written for ten Double Basses (D.B.), a Box, and a Piano. The tempo and performance instructions are 'mit Druck/with pressure, non accel.' and 'poco cresc.'. The score is in 2/4 time and features a series of rhythmic patterns across the instruments. The Piano part is in the right hand, and the Box part is in the left hand. The score is marked with 'ff' and 'poco cresc.' throughout.

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In Composition No. 1, a sustained, chorale-like passage occurs at the end, meeting the expectation of peace as the title implies. However, immediately after the piano enters with an ostinato, there is a violent return of the first movement: the piccolo shrieking with the dynamic marking of *ffff*. The work concludes again with the peaceful passage. Where Ustvolskaya puts a refined moment of meditative concentration adjacent to irregular violent eruptions,

rage is expressed with such extremity that it signifies a bypassing of human consciousness. The exhaustive repetition also alters the listener's perception of time: the present time is altered to form a static strength with a resultant intense, hypnotic communication.

A further way in which Ustvolskaya ensures focus and attention on God is by raising the sensation of ensemble performance: she specifies in the score notes that the various instrumental groups should listen to each other and that the frequent clusters, where each note written for each instrumental line, is as crucial as the other to result in the desired overall timbre. This is reinforced by further direction from Ustvolskaya in the score of her Symphony No. 3 in which she stated: 'the timbral complexes throughout the symphony must be balanced with utmost care'.¹¹⁰ However, she continues by revealing that the upper note of the clusters is the leading voice and should be emphasised accordingly. (This may simply be a practicality: after all, the majority of instruments in the ensemble occupy a low tessitura and the higher voices are more likely to be heard). The extremity of the tessitura found in the oboes (bars 4–7) is starkly opposed to the low tessitura found throughout the work in the tuba and double bass parts, which reflects the tension between the heavens (spiritual realm) and the earth (physical realm).

The overriding, obsessive crotchet pulse evokes far more sinister images than the simplicity initially projected. The low, dark crotchet beats of the double basses in Composition No. 2 are redolent of a funeral march, resonating pertinently with the composition's Latin subtitle *Dies Irae*. Ustvolskaya's implementation of a wooden box continues with this sombre notion as its crotchet pulsation suggests nails being knocked into a coffin. This acquires further significance from Malov's claim that it was originally Ustvolskaya's intention to use a coffin for this percussive technique; it was only her dissatisfaction with its timbral qualities that inspired her to specify the measurements for the wooden box.¹¹¹ The directions to make this 43cm x 43 cm cube are included in the score, and allude to the significance of carpentry in Christianity. The banging of nails into a coffin can also be interpreted as a

¹¹⁰ Ustvolskaya, *Symphony No. 3*, op. cit..

¹¹¹ Lee, op. cit., p. 48.

reference to the execution of Christ. Bagrenin relays the history of the creation of this instrument:

In the courtyard of the music college, where Galina Ivanovna worked there was a joiner's shop. When Ustvol'skaya came to a master to order a box for the *Second Composition*, she did not know either the size or the material she wanted. She said that she only knew the sound that it should produce. When the carpenter made one, she came to test it by knocking – no, not that. Varied sizes and wooden materials were tried... This went on for a very long time – the poor master, glimpsing Ustvol'skaya in the college yards, on a few occasions tried to escape. Then it turned out that any box made of any kind of wood makes a sound that the composer did not like, so they replaced wood with chipboard... Currently the author's original copy of the instrument – the only one she deemed sonically correct – is located in the apartment.¹¹²

Illus. 2.9: Ustvol'skaya's design for the wooden box used in her Composition No. 2



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Such experimental compositional techniques were commonplace in Western Europe at the time *Composition No. 2* was composed, but almost unheard of in

¹¹² Bagrenin, <ustvol'skaya.org/eng> (accessed on 04/10/2010).

Soviet music but Shostakovich's String Quartet No. 13 (1970) offers a similar technique. Although the overall mood of this quartet is somewhat sinister (all seven movements are marked *Adagio* and its completion coincides with the decline in Shostakovich's health), the mood of this tapping is more 'jazzy and sarcastic rather than deathly.'¹¹³ Ustvol'skaya's technique also prophesies *Himmels-Tür* [Heaven's Door] (2000) by Karlheinz Stockhausen (1928–2007), where a solo percussionist executes the piece on a wooden door (knocking on the door of Heaven), again created expressly by a carpenter for this purpose.

'A Cry in the Universe',¹¹⁴ 'The Lady with the Hammer',¹¹⁵ 'Forceful Russian Composer',¹¹⁶ 'and A Grand Russian Original'¹¹⁷ are all examples of the sensational discourse and rhetoric that surrounds Ustvol'skaya's later style. To musicologists, Ustvol'skaya's music has been written to shock theatrically, to shake Man into a spiritual realisation but also as a plea to a Christian God for the sake of all humanity. On his website, Bagrenin summarises Ustvol'skaya's attitude of extreme humility:

There is a Jewish anecdote or parable in which a Jew asks the Rabbi: 'Why is it, Rabbi, that the Lord once appeared to us in the desert, once spoke to us and led our people, but does so no longer?' The Rabbi answers: 'Because there is no longer anyone who can bow down low enough before Him.'¹¹⁸

At the very same time that these compositional changes were taking place, Ustvol'skaya's music began to disappear from the mainstream repertory in the main concert venues of St Petersburg. Ustvol'skaya was left alone in her St Petersburg apartment to build a musical language according to her own rules. Stripping it of its sentimentality, she created her own music with its own internal strength and aesthetic exclusiveness. Dispensing with the ideas of

¹¹³ Robert Moon, CD Liner notes: *Dmitri Shostakovich and Alfred Schnittke – String Quartets (The Soviet Experience, Vol. 4)*, Pacifica Quartet, Cedille, CDR 90000 145, Chicago, 2013.

¹¹⁴ Josée Voormans dir., *A Cry in the Universe*, DVD VPRO, 2005.

¹¹⁵ Elmer Schönberger, 'Galina Oestvol'skaja, de vrouw met de hamer' ['The Lady with the Hammer'], *Het Gebroken Oor* [The Broken Ear], Vrij Nederland, 27/04/1991, p. 69. In this article Schönberger reflects on a monographic Ustvol'skaya concert in the Glinka Hall in St Petersburg on 08/04/1991.

¹¹⁶ Kozinn, op. cit..

¹¹⁷ Alex Ross, *Ustvol'skaya: A Grand Russian Original Steps out of the Midst*, New York Times, 28/05/1995 <<http://www.therestisnoise.com/2005/02/ustvol'skaya.html>> (accessed on 25/05/2015).

¹¹⁸ Bagrenin, <ustvol'skaya.org/eng> (accessed on 04/04/2010).

tradition and convention, Ustvolskaya also dispensed with the idea of ‘progress’, content to stand alone. Ustvolskaya indignantly protested that she composed outside of any musical tradition with no influence either imposed upon her or willingly absorbed: but how tenable is this idea? Although her music was subject to geopolitical and social isolation (both out of choice and force), surely it must have arisen from *somewhere*. This chapter begins to address the various factors that could have shaped her personal aesthetic in order to attempt to demonstrate exactly how Ustvolskaya’s distinctive voice was forged.

2.2: Religiosity

2.2.1: Iconicity

There are many further complexities when it comes to the subject of identifying the spiritual aspects of musical language, never more so than when attempting to distinguish between the conveyance of ‘the mystical’ and ‘the religious’ in any musical composition. This is an issue that Ivan Moody comprehensively explores in his article ‘The Mind and Heart: Mysticism and Music in the Experience of Contemporary Orthodox Composers’ by positioning music as a vehicle for mystical experiences, aligning its mystical qualities with those of a religious icon. This naturally has a deeper resonance when considering the Eastern Orthodox experience from which Ustvolskaya’s music sprang. For an Orthodox Christian, an icon is not merely an artistic impression with significance in terms of art history – or indeed a sentimentally religious implication – but instead presents itself as a holy existence to be venerated.¹¹⁹ The incarnate existence of an icon can therefore be paralleled by the capacity of music, as they may both act as a holy presence manifested.

¹¹⁹ Ivan Moody, ‘The Mind and the Heart: Mysticism and Music in the Experience of Contemporary Eastern Orthodox Composers’, *Contemporary Music Review*, Vol. 14, Nos. 3–4 (1996), pp. 65–66.

Although it may sound somewhat implausible that a creation of man could act as a means of transportation to God, indubitably this idea is worthy of certain investigation as it may well reveal much regarding the attitude behind the genesis of composition by Eastern Orthodox composers. Moody is only one example of an Orthodox composer who affirmatively believes in this mystical aptitude of music: ‘Orthodoxy speaks of the mind entering the heart – this is the condition for real prayer – and this must be, at least partially, what is required for the composition of sacred music.’¹²⁰ This combination of spiritual intensity of the heart and the mind is largely what not only epitomises the composition of Russian sacred music, but also provides the basis for the Orthodox. Indeed, Orthodox monks incline their heads towards their hearts when they pray, as if praying no longer is an occupation of the mind.¹²¹ Ustvolskaya considered her music a vessel through which to transcend the physical (or cultural) realm: her compositions are wholly devoted to her spiritual ideas, demonstrated by her homage to the liturgical practice of the Russian Orthodox Church. Ustvolskaya did in fact say of her own work that it was not religious in a ‘literal’ sense, but rather surrounded by a ‘religious spirit’.¹²² Although it cannot be disputed that Ustvolskaya’s music is shaped dramatically by its religious character, of course it does not exist as a literal spiritual manifestation – sound itself is a physical, scientific occurrence. Rather it is the musical constructs that she employs that convey an illusion of a spiritual warfare between Heaven and Earth, Good and Evil and – ultimately – Man and God. By exploring these dualities a pertinent survey of both Ustvolskaya’s intentions and the forces obstructing her creative output can be achieved.

A heightened relevance of Ustvolskaya’s usage of the *znamenny raspev* (see Chapter 5) is encountered as the role of the chant is viewed in the context of the Russian Orthodox Church. This incorporates a particular resonance as the concept of the iconostasis is considered. The iconostasis may be understood as the boundary between one world and the next.¹²³ As a consequence of this

¹²⁰ Moody, *ibid.*, p. 66.

¹²¹ John Tavener in Andrew Ford, *Composer to Composer* (London: Quartet, 1993).

¹²² Letter accessed in the PSS on 14/11/2008, dated 17/05/1988.

¹²³ This, for instance, may comprise the bricks and mortar that may be an obstruction to a view of an altar (in the context of the church building) or (in the context of the Russian Orthodox

human frailty recognised by the Orthodox mentality, the Church created visual, material strength to compensate for this inevitable short-sightedness. The icons in the Iconostasis function as a window between this world and the heavenly realm, bestowing a route through which human frailty can bear witness before God. The icon coincides with a spiritual vision within human consciousness, enabling a focus and consequential entrance into the heavenly sphere. Pavel Florensky summarises thus:

Thus a window is a window because a region of light opens out beyond it, hence the window giving us this light is not itself 'like' the light, nor is it subjectively linked in our imagination with our ideas of light- but the window is that very light itself, in its ontological self-identity, that very light which, undivided-in-itself and thus inseparable from the sun, is streaming down from the heavens. But the window all by itself – i.e., apart from its relationship to the light, beyond its function as a carrier of light – is no longer a window but dead wood and mere glass.¹²⁴

Illus. 2.10: Main iconostasis of the Church of the Transfiguration, Uglich, Russia¹²⁵



theology) a human weakness that forcibly separates the physical world and the unearthly, invisible spiritual realm.

¹²⁴ Pavel Florensky, *Iconostasis* (New York: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2000), p. 65. Pavel Florensky (1882–1937) was a Russian Orthodox priest and theologian; the quotation included here is an assertion arising from his profound, emic understanding of the ritual and theology of the Orthodox Church.

¹²⁵ Photograph taken by Sarah Jamerson <<https://www.flickr.com/photos/travelwyse/6801509003/>> (accessed on 09/03/2015).

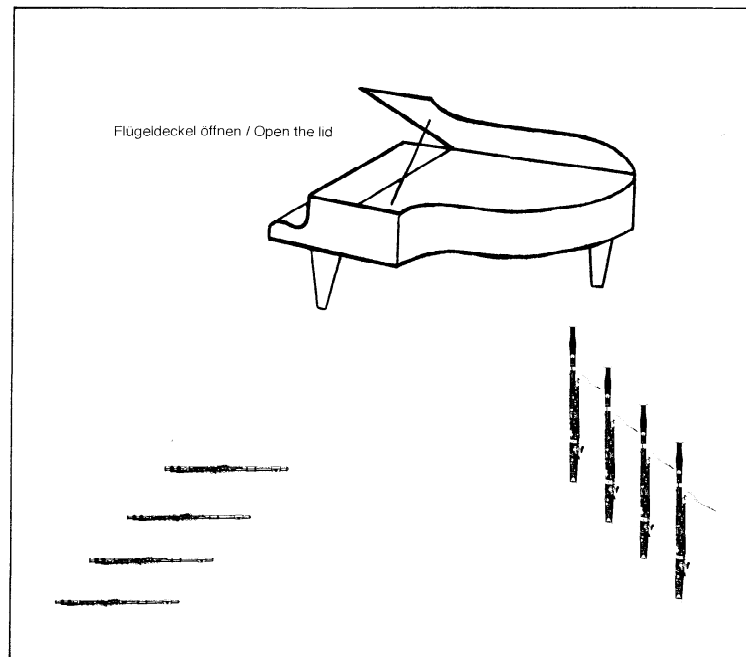
A further insight into the phenomenon of the Iconostasis is supplied by Egon Wellesz's account of Byzantine Orthodox history:

The monk who paints an icon, who writes a hymn and gives it a melody, is guided by the principles of the Orthodox theology, which finds in its artistic creations the reflection and echo of a celestial emanation that earthly eyes may not see or hear.¹²⁶

Florensky's metaphor and Wellesz's description are simple enough to understand, as they describe the icon as a symbolic carrier to attain an end. Of course, initially, the most obvious aspect that springs to mind will be the self-luminescence in the icon paintings and engravings found on the walls on every Orthodox Church. However, according to Florensky's definition, the concept of 'the icon' can indeed be transferred and superimposed upon the role of music in a liturgical context. Indeed, the human voice engaged in this ancient practice – when its function is viewed in the context of the Orthodox service ritual – undeniably provides this very 'window' through which to transcend the physical and access the heavens. As a result, Ustvolskaya's implementation of a liturgical, spiritual function works as a 'sonic icon', and is essentially an inclusion of an established method of providing this 'window' to God. Thus, Ustvolskaya's approach suggests that her music is intended not as a concrete spiritual manifestation but as a channel, which is necessary to accomplish interaction with the heavens. Ustvolskaya takes this one step further by symbolically representing the visual icons of the church as part of the performance ritual of her work. Figure 2.11 and Illustration 2.12 indicate the connection between the stage direction of Ustvolskaya's Composition No. 3 (1974–75), and Andrei Rublev's famous icon of the Holy Trinity, c. 1410.

¹²⁶ Egon Wellesz, *The Music of the Byzantine Church, Anthology of Music*, Vol. 13 (Köln: Arno Volk Verlag), p. 6.

Fig. 2.11: Stage directions printed in the opening page of Ustvolskaya's Composition No. 3



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Illus. 2.12: Andrei Rublev's icon of the Holy Trinity, c. 1410



At first it may seem a little incongruous that the overriding spiritual element of Ustvolskaya's music was accomplished in the Soviet Union, a state where religious practice was so ferociously negated and restricted. In addition, the tradition of the Orthodox Church has forbidden instrumental music as part of its practice in favour of elevating the voice as the pathway between Man and God. It therefore seems surprising that Ustvolskaya's – and so many other Russian composers' – music is so often intrinsically connected to a religious experience. In addition to this, atheism is central to the Communist's scientific outlook: a world-view where any concept of God was to be replaced by Man. An attempt to obliterate religion was largely successful following the militaristic ideology of the Bolsheviks, the harsh suppression of religious practice by Stalin and a fierce anti-religion campaign by Nikita Khrushchev. The main purpose of the anti-religion campaigns in the 1920s and 1930s was to obliterate the Russian Orthodox Church. Members and leaders of the church were shot, sent to labour camps, ridiculed and harassed: military atheism was propagated in schools. By 1939 only 500 of over 50, 000 churches were still open.¹²⁷ From the mid-1960s Russian composers were no longer simply experimenting with ideas associated with the avant-garde; a creative movement that returned to the pre-Marxist/Leninist era and offered an alternative to the official, ideological control that was beginning to be established. This came in the form of a revival of Russian spiritual heritage. Through this, composers could retrace their cultural and religious roots fuelled by an intransigent response to the restrictions of the previous half-century. In addition, it seems Ustvolskaya sought spiritual comfort from the marginalised existence in which she felt forced to retreat.

Ustvolskaya did not practice any particular religion and did not refer directly to a Christian God but frequently acknowledged a superior existence that has ultimate knowledge and control of the world to come. Contemporary with Ustvolskaya's compositional creations, interest in religion was growing within the Soviet Union, especially amongst the younger generations. An expression of freedom of thought and disagreement with the system manifested

¹²⁷ Unknown author, *Anti-Religious Campaigns: Revelations from the Russian Archives* <<http://www.loc.gov/exhibits/archives/anti.html>> (accessed on 09/03/2015).

itself by an attraction to Russia's ancient Church. Participation in the Church's ancient practices and theology provided an oppressed Russian people not only with spiritual freedom, but also with a vehicle through which to protest against the Soviet authorities' attempt to control ideologically. As Basil Lourié observes: 'The numbers of martyrs and confessors gained by the Russian Church during the first twenty years of the Soviet regime was probably more than the total number throughout Christian history.'¹²⁸ It must also be noted that Russian Orthodoxy thus became a representation of nation: people looked to the Church as a symbol of their national identity, rather than to the state. Ustvolskaya's attraction to the theological and spiritual activities of the Church enabled her to participate in this widespread trend. Composing spiritual music enabled her to break from the state, explore her own freedom of thought, protest against the ideological control imposed on her, identify with her nation, and find spiritual refuge during such a socially (and spiritually) devastating era. Lourié outlines this widespread attraction to the Orthodox Church:

In general, the interest of the Russian people in the Orthodox Church, after reaching a peak in the mid-1990s, rapidly decreased once their initial curiosity had been satisfied. However, according to sociological studies, the percentage of people who declare themselves Orthodox is considerably higher than that of those who say 'yes' to the question 'Do you believe in God?' (correspondingly, about 70 percent and 50 per cent of the population). Until the late twentieth century, and especially in the years 1993-8, the Moscow Patriarchate was struggling for both legal and unofficial recognition as a kind of 'state religion', trying to fill the vacuum left by the defeated Communist ideology.¹²⁹

Ustvolskaya's personal idea about the Deity is the direct opposite of twenty percent of the Russian people, who identify as Orthodox but do not believe in God: Ustvolskaya believed in God, but did not identify as Orthodox. What Lourié's study does show us, however, is that it was (and still is) common practice in Russia, to identify with one without the other. Although Ustvolskaya's compositions are undoubtedly elevated as a spiritual experience, they were not composed to fulfil any specific religious (or liturgical) function. Ustvolskaya's statements that her music was best suited to performance in a

¹²⁸ Basil Lourié, Ken Parry ed., 'Russian Christianity', *The Blackwell Companion to Eastern Christianity* (Malden, Oxford, Chichester: Blackwell Publishing Ltd., 2007), p. 229.

¹²⁹ Lourié, *ibid.*.

church seem to contradict her attitude that her music was not religious in the ‘literal sense’. Thus the maintenance of the unity of ‘feeling’ and ‘meaning’ becomes problematical: the concert hall, church or otherwise is not necessarily advantageous when conveying her intended ‘meaning’. Ustvolskaya’s music was not written as ‘concert music’ but rather as an integral part of her own spiritual being. The function of her own life certainly seemed to be *sacred* if not religious. It is with this in mind that it is appropriate to reflect the *function* of the performance of Ustvolskaya’s music and a greater resonance is inferred in the notion of her music as ritual. Her music undeniably contains ritualistic elements, as the sound adopts the capacity to transcend the physicality of sonic experience. In any ritual activity, different participants possess different roles and functions in its creation. As the various instruments in Ustvolskaya’s works function as their own, individual personalities, their interaction and integration cause the encounter to be experienced in its totality.

2.2.2: Ritual and Ceremony

Orthodoxy is highly ritualistic in its expression. The overriding concept in Orthodox practice is that the liturgy is the direct expression of the Church’s theology. If the ritual and traditions are preserved, then the theology will also remain intact. In Orthodox theology, ritual also heightens the profundity of activity, while repetition imprints the given words that accompany the ritual in the believer’s mind.¹³⁰

Through time, music has adopted several possible functions that can be divided broadly into two categories: the *sacred* and the *secular*. Directly opposite examples of these two functions are: music to accompany a religious ceremony and music as pure entertainment. However, there are intermediate levels of these two extremes. For instance, a liturgical setting (*sacred*) could be transposed to performance in a concert hall (*secular*). This is a frequent occurrence in Western concert halls where music that was written for

¹³⁰ In conversation with Ivan Moody, London, 03/11/2009.

liturgical/sacred purposes becomes entertainment and is performed in a secular setting. In these instances, rather than retaining its original liturgical function, the composer's original intentions are compromised, and the listener is only experiencing feeling of the music, as its true meaning is stunted by its environment.¹³¹

In Ustvol'skaya's music, however, there is a rather different situation: although her music is undoubtedly elevated as a spiritual experience, it was not composed to fulfil any specific religious function. Had she even wished for her music to function liturgically there would have been little chance of this, given the political situation of twentieth-century Russia. As a result, the performance of her music in a secular setting does not constitute this transformation of function (from sacred to secular): her music retains its spiritual subject without its performance in a religious setting. To Ustvol'skaya, music was not mere aesthetic pleasure but a spiritual existence that was soul devouring. Gladkova aptly maintains that 'one should not only listen to her music; it is a music that should be experienced, because it burns with expression and pain. Her music is tragic in its essence'.¹³²

It is perhaps also necessary to assess the role of the narrator in Ustvol'skaya's Symphony No. 2, which it can be argued is her most important work. During correspondence with the author, Bagrenin reminisced how, after Ustvol'skaya had been listening to de Leeuw's recording of Symphony No. 2, she was intensely satisfied and grateful, saying: 'It was worth living'.¹³³ In this work, the male narrator, again dressed in black (which itself is further indicative of a ritual), is instructed to emit a primitive scream 'Ay-y-y!'. Josée Voormans' documentary contains valuable and rare footage of Ustvol'skaya's own personal direction of this casting, showing the emphasis she placed upon this role.¹³⁴ The narrator is symbolic of all mankind, crying out in the darkness of the blackened stage in an unarticulate howl to God. Mankind as one entity – one collective offender who has separated Man and God and who must struggle as one communal unit for redemption – is authenticated by an autobiographical detail: Ustvol'skaya kept a bust of Christ by her bed with the inscription *Pro*

¹³¹ Christian Mason, *Why a 'Concert-Ritual'?*, unpublished paper, University of York, 2006.

¹³² Gladkova, op. cit., p. 1.

¹³³ Bagrenin, via e-mail, translated and received via Bakhmin, 20/06/2010.

¹³⁴ Voormans dir., op. cit..

Humanitate (For Humankind).¹³⁵ The feature of this primitive – and somewhat barbaric – exclamation in Symphony No. 2, repeated and coupled with the dramatic staging required, escapes the contemporary world and becomes a timeless metaphor for the depths into which humankind has plunged, invoking a quasi-ritualistic encounter as a performance experience.

Although the cry does not feature in Symphony No. 3, apocalypse is no further from reality as the instruments adopt the same sinister force. The apotheosis implied in the previous symphony is this time replaced by Ustvolskaya's dramatic implementation of solo percussion. As the percussion accompanies the solo voice at the culmination of the piece, Dullaghan invites comparison with the primitive ritual of the shaman (healer), who performed his healing aided by a sacred drum.¹³⁶ In the score, Ustvolskaya explicitly directs the performers where to sit and assumes complete control over the interpretation of the score: each note has its own specific direction imposed upon it, so that there is no chance of the performance disrupting the ritual Ustvolskaya has composed.

It would seem, however, that Dullaghan's acknowledgement of shamanism can be expanded to hitherto unparalleled heights, particularly when the historical significance of shamanism is considered. Shamanism cannot be considered a global religion as it differs enormously in customs and beliefs from place to place, but it is widespread in Eastern European and Asian history. Shamanism thrived in ancient Greece, influencing Greek paganism as reflected in the stories of Prometheus, Medea and Tantalus. Some Greek shamanic practices merged into Roman religion, including the chanting practiced even in contemporary Judeo-Christian religious services. Although it was largely marginalised by monotheism in Europe, shamanism is still a flourishing, organised religion in Mari-El (where the Mari religion combines Christianity with elements of totemism and shamanism – as well as functioning adjacently to Russian Orthodox Christians and Old Believers) and Udmurtia (although the majority of nationals are atheist or Russian Orthodox, shamanism still prospers), two semi-autonomous provinces of Russia with large Finno-Ugric populations. It is perhaps Siberia that is the *locus classicus* of

¹³⁵ Noted by the author during a visit to Ustvolskaya's apartment in April 2008.

¹³⁶ Dullaghan, *op. cit.*, p. 92.

shamanism. When the border of the People's Republic of China was finally sealed in 1949, many nomadic groups that practiced shamanism were kept in Manchuria and Inner Mongolia.¹³⁷ Nonetheless, shamanism had been an intrinsic component of ancient Russia, the era which Ustvolskaya constantly invokes in search of a purity of musical language and an affinity to nature. It is therefore highly probable that an investigation of shamanism can aid our understanding of Ustvolskaya's attempts to combine a natural, historical and spiritual language into her musical discourse.

Shamans were believed to be intermediaries between the spiritual and physical (natural) world, but – unlike priests – were not organised into full-time spiritual or ritual associations. It was their role to attempt to traverse the *axis mundi* and return with knowledge from the Heavens. A list of definitive shamanist practice includes drumming, chanting, trance, use of hallucinogenics, spirit communication, fortune telling, healing and sacrifice.¹³⁸ By the appropriation of ancient pagan activities – namely drumming, chanting, use of trance-inducing rhythmic and motivic repetition – Ustvolskaya invokes the very notions that these characteristics are set to represent, as well as adding to the ritualistic *experience* required for the duration of her performance. This reference to ancient practice, however, also reinforces several concepts akin to Ustvolskaya's version of contemporary Christianity. (For instance, it was the role of the shaman to accompany the souls of the newly dead in the spirit world, or to retrieve the lost soul of an ill person.) Indeed, expanding the metaphor even further, Ustvolskaya's narrator in Symphony No. 2 is, as previously established, a spokesperson for all humanity in keeping with the traditional role of the shaman, who would contact the dead on behalf of a community. The narrator adopts the task of the traditional shaman and attempts to retrieve Ustvolskaya's 'lost souls' by transcending the physical sphere and achieving contact – and ultimately guidance and understanding – through music, chanting and repetitive chant-like rhythms. It is important to note that a further inherent trait of a shaman's conduct would be storytelling or singing; a follower of the shaman who could memorise long texts and/or play a musical

¹³⁷ For further information as to the role and practices of shaman, see: Piers Vitebsky, *Shamanism* (Oklahoma, USA: University of Oklahoma Press, 2001).

¹³⁸ Vitebsky, *ibid.*

instrument may be regarded as fulfilling an obligation to contact the spiritual world. Perhaps Ustvolskaya's most famous technique employed during numerous of her compositions that exploit this ancient union to the greatest extent is her implementation of the wooden box and hammer as a percussive force (in Composition No. 2) and the symbolising of the colossal scope of inflated power.

The ritualistic ideas behind Ustvolskaya's music directly imposes influence upon the musical language she employs. Wordless shouts, aggressive rhythmic pulsations, uncontrolled dissonances, religious symbolism, specific spatial directions all comprise Ustvolskaya's ritualistic musical language, but what exactly does she wish to achieve through such a ceremonial performance?

Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov (1844–1908) spoke of his affinity with ritualistic paganism in the context of his overtly religious *Russian Easter Festival Overture* (1887–88). Despite his extensive explanation as to the ecclesiastical origins of the melodic and semantic content of his music, he continues by aligning Christian ritual with pagan ritual describing it as: 'Combined reminiscences of the ancient prophecy of the Gospel narrative, and also a general picture of the Easter service with its "pagan merry-making".'¹³⁹ Rimsky-Korsakov furthers this comparison by directly comparing both the Orthodox aural and visual spectacles to pagan activity: 'Surely the Russian Orthodox chime is instrumental dance-music of the church? ... Do not the waving beards of priests ... sextons clad in white vestments and surplices ... transport the imagination to pagan times?'¹⁴⁰

Both Rimsky-Korsakov and Stravinsky align their ritualistic writing with a time that goes back further in history than the rites of the Orthodox Church: back to a pagan Russia. It must be remembered that despite her allusions to church rituals, Ustvolskaya was not a practising member of the Orthodox Church. Perhaps, in the same vein as Rimsky-Korsakov and Stravinsky, Ustvolskaya was returning to a time even before the introduction of the ancient church rites to a primitive Russia, a time before the social and political corruption of Russia began. To Ustvolskaya, the purity of an ancient, pagan

¹³⁹ Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov, Carl van Vechten ed., trans. Judith A. Joffe, *My Musical Life* (New York: Tudor), p. 293.

¹⁴⁰ Rimsky-Korsakov, *ibid.*

Russia could mobilise the plea for redemption that her music would attempt.

Andrew Ford writes:

In *Ustvolskaya's* Sonata No. 6...I hear music that is in touch with something fundamental in our existence, music that seeks and rediscovers the earthy side of our nature, and in doing so restores and resets our humanity. Precisely because of this, it also puts in motion new cycles of musical creativity that will themselves end up in return to those same primitive qualities.¹⁴¹

Presenting the performance of her music as a ritual serves to heighten the impact of Ustvolskaya's music, as well as to elevate the sense of profundity in performance. An audience member is not only invited to 'observe' and 'enjoy', but is required to experience the music in its functional capacity. Performers are not merely invited to present the music to an audience, but they are required to enter into the ritual for the audience to witness and, indeed, join in if they wish. This is similar to the practice of the Orthodox faithful: as part of a divine service, the priests are the figures who perform most of the ritual (in terms of singing, reciting or practical matters behind the iconostasis), thus requiring a congregational response (still as part of the ritual).

The spiritual implications of Ustvolskaya's 'rites' cannot be ignored; their reference to pagan rites, as well as ceremonial aspects of Orthodoxy, are consistent with Ustvolskaya's outlook that there is no one 'true' religion that is free from corruption. Ustvolskaya knew that instrumental music was not permitted in the Orthodox Church, yet suggested that the church buildings were the most apt venues for performances of her work. This is because, according to Bagrenin, 'She did not know a better place in Russia infused with spirit.'¹⁴²

¹⁴¹ Andrew Ford, *Earth Dances: Music in Search of the Primitive* (Cillingwood: Black Inc., 2015), p. 39–40.

¹⁴² Bagrenin, via e-mail, translated and received via Bakhmin, 21/06/2010.

2.3: Philosophical Aesthetics

2.3.1: Losev

One of the greatest minds in Russian philosophical and religious thought in the twentieth century was Aleksei Losev (1893–1988), whose work earned him a position in (amongst other places) the Moscow Conservatory in 1929. Losev's philosophy was profoundly based on religion – he and his wife, Valentina, secretly received monastic tonsure. During his childhood, Losev's father left the family home, and he was brought up by his mother and her father, an Orthodox priest. He had studied violin as a young man, and knew Florensky personally. Losev's philosophical, theological and even musical ideas would have been of significant interest to Ustvolskaya. During her lifetime Ustvolskaya seldom allowed musicologists or critics to question her over her music but musicologist Sister Andre Dullaghan is one of the few exceptions. According to Gladkova, Ustvolskaya always referred to Dullaghan as 'the nun' and willingly allowed her into her home in order to provide interviews.¹⁴³ Indeed, Ustvolskaya's own reclusive, disciplined lifestyle suggests a life of devotion.

Losev's teachings were based on the concept that one must accept the world in which we live as purely mythical. This led him to conclude that it is impossible to develop a concrete attitude towards anything that is separated from myth. To Losev, myth is the context of history, the archetype of behaviours; myth is both nature and culture and is thus preserved in all memory.

According to Losev, mythology is impossible without religion, as myth is a reflection of pure feeling (although he is careful to disconnect mythology from religion: myth is not religion itself). Religion itself is in fact defined purely by sacraments i.e. the Church:

¹⁴³ In conversation with Gladkova, St Petersburg, 08/04/2008.

The dialectical relation between mythology and theology is the same as that between art and science, while the relation between mythology and ritual is the same as that between art and morality. Similarly, one must admit that the relation between theology and religion is the same, in dialectical terms, as that between cognition or science and life...¹⁴⁴

Unique to Ustvolskaya is the implementation of aggressive, physical gestures that provide a sense of the ‘unearthly’ or a profundity beyond the understandings of Man. The constant interchange between violence and peaceful benevolent sections summarises the prevailing contrast of spirituality, as it exists alongside its antithesis: physicality. The spirituality on which Ustvolskaya’s work is so thoroughly centred is unremittingly expressed through violent, physical means. To Ustvolskaya, this violence is necessary as a reminder of God’s fury, human fragility and mankind’s retribution. Primarily, however, the violent physicality in Ustvolskaya’s music serves as an *aide-memoire* to all humanity concerning the impending Day of Judgement. This ritualism has greater relevance in terms of Losev’s dialectical relations as he continues:

...the relation between ritual and religion is the same as that between morality and life, and, finally, the relation between mythology and religion is the same as that between art and life.¹⁴⁵

When Ustvolskaya was composing her music, it was not merely an art that stood alone: instead, it encompassed implications of universal truths regarding morality and, most importantly, God. A connection can thus be seen with other composers who translated these philosophical writings to music. For example, the concept of the *Mysterium* conceived by Alexander Scriabin (1871–1915) is indicative of the ideas prevailing in the years leading up to the Russian revolution. His ideas also resonate particularly powerfully with those of Losev. Boris Asafiev (composer, musicologist, critic, 1884–1949) points to Scriabin’s writings on the subject:

¹⁴⁴ Aleksei Fyodorovich Losev, trans. Vladimir Marchenkov, *The Dialectics of Myth* (London and New York: Routledge, Taylor and Francis Group, 2003), p. 180.

¹⁴⁵ Losev, *ibid.*

It is necessary to understand that the material of which our Universe is made, is our imagination, our creative idea, our desire, and therefore – in terms of the material there is no difference between the state of mind we call ‘a stone which we hold in our hands’ and the other state of mind called ‘a dream’. A stone and a dream are made out of the same matter and they are equally real. They only occupy different positions in our mind. The ... stone is a psychological process that happens at present ... A dream is a process in the future.¹⁴⁶

Losev’s influence was philosophically to merge the physical and spiritual worlds into one, so that there was no distinction between one’s physical actions and their spiritual resonance. This is an entirely Ustvolskayan concept. Not only does Ustvolskaya savour the spiritual ‘obligations’ in her works, but she also implements (superficially, oxymoronically) physical gestures through which to experience – and communicate – her spiritual values.

2.3.2: Schopenhauer

There are, however, also certain parallels with Western philosophy that are worth examining since it is known that Ustvolskaya had come into contact with and welcomed the works of Arthur Schopenhauer (philosopher, 1788–1860) and Friedrich Nietzsche (philosopher, 1844–1900).¹⁴⁷ Schopenhauer was translated into Russian before the 1917 revolution, but because Ustvolskaya read German fluently, she could have read either the Russian or the German edition. Schopenhauer’s influential concept of the Will¹⁴⁸ suggests that human beings choose to imagine that their insignificant lives have some kind of higher meaning. One way to escape the Will (or, more significantly, the problems that arise through conflicting Wills) is to engage in artistic endeavours, or else to lead a life of ascetic denial. Essentially art provided Schopenhauer with a way to escape the suffering caused by ‘willing’ and, as a consequence, thrust art

¹⁴⁶ Quoted in Boris Asafiev, ‘*Tsennost muzyki*’ [‘The Value of Music’], *De Musica* (Petrograd: Petrogradskaya gosudarstvennaya akademicheskaya filarmoniya, 1923).

¹⁴⁷ In conversation with Bagrenin, St Petersburg, 09/04/2008.

¹⁴⁸ Schopenhauer used the term ‘The Will’ to represent the familiar human condition of ‘striving’, ‘desire’ or ‘wanting’.

onto a pedestal: art could end the pessimism of his world view and deliver him from suffering. As a result:

...to experience something aesthetically, one must suspend or disengage all one's desires towards it, attending not to any consideration of what ends, needs or interests it may fulfil, but only to the way it presents itself in perception...aesthetic experience must always be an extraordinary episode in any human being's life.¹⁴⁹

Schopenhauer's pessimistic world-view resonates entirely with Ustvolskaya's. Schopenhauer advises artistic endeavours as an escape from earthly suffering and Ustvolskaya opts for that very same route.

Schopenhauer's theories of music have been appropriated by many composers throughout the years and set apart from his account of the other arts. Schopenhauer believed that music had the ability to parallel the world, rather than to merely represent it. All the parts of the polyphony are representations of the Will in its various organic and inorganic manifestations. Music is therefore, to Schopenhauer, not just representative of human strivings but also a microcosm of the entire phenomenal world. As Brian Magee puts it: '[to Schopenhauer] music and the phenomenal world are both direct, unmediated manifestations of the metaphysical will. Therefore they do not stand to each other as *representation* to *represented* but as *equivalents*'.¹⁵⁰ In this sense, music stands apart from other arts as it is not a direct reproduction or imitation of the phenomenal world, but a direct expression of the Will itself. Music is a:

...great and glorious art, its effect on man's inmost nature is so powerful, and it is so completely and so deeply understood by him in his inmost consciousness as a perfectly universal language whose clarity surpasses even that of the perceptible world itself.¹⁵¹

Schopenhauer showers music with eulogising compliments, attributing to it a sublime significance, continuing:

¹⁴⁹ Christopher Janaway, *Schopenhauer: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), p. 70.

¹⁵⁰ Brian Magee, *The Philosophy of Schopenhauer* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991), p. 240.

¹⁵¹ Arthur Schopenhauer, trans. Jill Berman, *The World as Will and Idea* (London: J. M. Dent, Everyman, 1995), p. 162.

So music is by no means (as are the other arts) the copy of the Ideas, but the *copy of the will itself*, whose objectivity the Ideas are. This is why the effect of music is so much more powerful and penetrating than that of the other arts, for they speak only of the shadow while music speaks of the essence.¹⁵²

The aesthetic that Schopenhauer describes reflects the enormous significance Ustvolskaya places on the role of her music. To Ustvolskaya, music is not entertainment but functions as a consequential expression of deep human strivings. The piccolos of her chamber music squeal to a higher power, as the tubas utter ominous low inflections: in so many of her works, the triple-forte poundings on the piano demand extreme physical exertion from the performer. Many other examples of this physicality can be identified: in her three Compositions, Ustvolskaya's directions become littered with violent gestures: full hand, fist and arm clusters, blows of the palms and fingers, blows of fists, of the left and right arms and blows by the palms. However, it is, notoriously, Composition No. 2 that most taxes the performers physically; it is brutally exhausting and challenging for both the players and the listeners. For a comprehensive example there is no need to look further than the piano part: at figure 28 the pianist is required to place a chord on every crotchet beat with full bodily force one hundred and fifty times. The pianist has no fewer than five cadenzas and has no break in the entire work other than the four general pauses. Stamina is required from both the performer and listener for the full twenty minutes as the piece culminates, still with immense energy, demanding tremendous dynamic forces. This is not music to charm a discerning audience; rather it summons the audience to participate in a true expression of suffering. This does not represent suffering; in Schopenhauerian terms, it *is* suffering.

Furthermore, Schopenhauer equated aspects of music with matter of the phenomenal world: the bass, for example, as the planet's mass. He continues to explain how a return to a key-note in conventional Western harmony provides a relief — or gratification — from the digression and deviation that occurs in a melody. Schopenhauer sees the harmonious intervals as desire (or suffering), and its resolution to the tonic note as ultimate gratification before the next launch into a new desire: 'In all these excursions melody expresses the many

¹⁵² Schopenhauer, *ibid.*, p. 164.

different forms of the Will's striving, but always its gratification too, by finally returning to a harmonious interval, and still more, to the key-note'.¹⁵³ Schopenhauer here is writing about music contemporary to him and mentions, in particular, the music of Gioachino Rossini (1792–1868) as a fine example. Yet his ideas have further significance with regard to Ustvolskaya. Constant characteristics of her mature style are here – thickly textured, dissonant, clustered chords, no sense of a home key, and the dissonances are never resolved in any conventional fashion. In Schopenhauerian terms, Ustvolskaya's music is saturated with 'digression' and 'deviation' from traditional musical language through the harrowing clusters, but she never allows us any form of 'gratification'. In other words, Ustvolskaya denies any representation of happiness: her suffering is unresolved and always will be. Schopenhauer discusses the personal effects of such a preoccupation:

Men of great intellectual worth, or, still more, men of genius, can have only very few friends; for their clear eye soon discovers all defects, and their sense of rectitude is always being outraged afresh by the extent and the horror of them... On the heights we must expect to be solitary.¹⁵⁴

Such a statement is reflected by Ustvolskaya in her personal social choices, her need for solitude and her difficult character: she did not fit in easily with the composers' circles of the time. It stands to reason that a person of such intellectual leanings or, as Schopenhauer would put it, without a 'worldly' personality, might find solitary time spent on refining the mind (or in Ustvolskaya's case artistic pursuits) more fulfilling than adhering to social norms. This resonates tangibly with Ustvolskaya's detachment from the Soviet composers' circles. It is almost as though, for both Ustvolskaya and Schopenhauer, one should test oneself through solitude. If one is content with being alone, one has the capacity to be great and is free from influence, repression, imposed order and social conformities. The figure depicted by Voormans' documentary portrays Ustvolskaya as a solitary figure, composing

¹⁵³ Schopenhauer, *ibid.*, p. 167.

¹⁵⁴ Arthur Schopenhauer, trans. T. Bailey Saunders, *The Art of Controversy: Aphorisms* <<http://ebooks.adelaide.edu.au/s/schopenhauer/arthur/controversy/>> (ebooks@Adelaide, 2009) (accessed on 26/06/2010).

in the vast, bleak Park Pobedy near her apartment.¹⁵⁵ Not content with human company, a solitary Ustvolskaya seeks refuge by talking to the trees and birds. To argue that Ustvolskaya was untroubled in her life is to misunderstand the point but Ustvolskaya *was not* troubled by her solitary existence: quite the reverse. In the same vein as Schopenhauer, Ustvolskaya opted for a solitary life as a sanctuary from her life of suffering.

Illus. 2.13: Ustvolskaya in Pavlovsk, just outside St Petersburg¹⁵⁶



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¹⁵⁵ Voormans dir., op. cit..

¹⁵⁶ This was reportedly Ustvolskaya's favourite place, where she worked on her Second Symphony.

It is the composer's job, according to Schopenhauer, to invent the melody and consequently disclose the deepest secrets of human Will through his/her compositions, and this is exactly the role Ustvolskaya adopts. The figure of the composer thus:

...reveals the inner nature of the world, and expresses the most profound wisdom in a language which his reasoning faculty does not understand, just as a person mesmerised talks about things of which he has no understanding when he awakes.¹⁵⁷

As Ustvolskaya herself stated, her inspiration would come 'from God' and not herself (see p. 29). In order to reveal fully the nature of her suffering, Ustvolskaya waited for an inspiration that was beyond her own human understanding, in accordance with Schopenhauerian theory. Ustvolskaya saw herself as a representative of Man before God. The protagonists she created (such as the narrator in her second symphony) are instructed through the score to plead to her God on behalf of all humanity. Her music not only reveals the true wretchedness of the world but, as a universal spokeswoman, Ustvolskaya, in her wisdom as composer, refuses to resolve it.

¹⁵⁷ Schopenhauer, *The World as Will and Idea*, op. cit., p.167.

2.4: Influences/Parallels in Literature

2.4.1: Gogol

Bokman's monograph frequently discusses the role that literature played in Ustvolskaya's life,¹⁵⁸ drawing particular attention to her statement: 'Of all the writers I always preferred and still prefer Gogol. I think that he was misunderstood in his time and that he is still misunderstood now'.¹⁵⁹ Although not all of Bokman's observations and memoirs are condoned by Ustvolskaya's heirs, his statements concerning Ustvolskaya's love of Nikolai Gogol (writer, 1809–1852) are reinforced by Bagrenin's observation in a private e-mail to the author that: '[Ustvolskaya] liked Gogol very much',¹⁶⁰ as well as on the official website.¹⁶¹ Ustvolskaya's love of the writings of Gogol is also confirmed by Elena Nalimova: 'Konstantin Bagrenin remembered that in the last years of Ustvolskaya's life, when her eyesight weakened, she frequently asked him to read a few chapters from *Dead Souls*'.¹⁶² Furthermore, Gogol most certainly was a critic of government and the way that his contemporaneous official system was run: this would have been intensely attractive to an oppressed Ustvolskaya, despite the different era and governmental system that separate the two artists. Two of the officials in Gogol's short story *The Overcoat* are not even named: they are merely represented by rank, providing an image of a depersonalised St Petersburg to which Ustvolskaya could wholly relate. (*The Overcoat*, in particular, was a story Ustvolskaya liked very much.)¹⁶³ As Nalimova has written:

¹⁵⁸ Bokman, op. cit..

¹⁵⁹ Gladkova, op. cit., p. 30.

¹⁶⁰ Bagrenin, via e-mail, translated and received via Bakhmin, 09/06/2010.

¹⁶¹ Ustvolskaya, <<http://ustvolskaya.org/eng/>> (accessed on 17/02/2015).

¹⁶² Elena Nalimova, *Demystifying Galina Ustvolskaya: Critical Examination and Performance Interpretation*, PhD diss., University of London: Goldsmiths College <http://research.gold.ac.uk/8013/7/MUS_thesis_Nalimova_2012.pdf> (accessed on 12/09/2014), p. 115.

¹⁶³ Bagrenin, via e-mail, translated and received via Bakhmin, 09/06/2010.

Ustvolskaya's proclivity for a tragic, 'sunless' worldview that manifests itself in her music cannot be attributed to her as uniquely 'Ustvolskian'. Although Ustvolskaya's art was to a large extent determined by the composer's personal characteristics and events of her life, there is a striking similarity between the experience of hearing Ustvolskaya's music and other types of aesthetic experience, particularly those evoked by Russian literature.¹⁶⁴

The influence Gogol was to have on Ustvolskaya is outlined in great detail in Nalimova's monograph. She summarises this influence thus: 'the similarity of the subject matter, the choice of expressive tools, and the intensity with which each character is portrayed.'¹⁶⁵ For example, she draws attention to the fact that, in Gogol's stories, the central hero is often an ordinary 'little man' whose life is thrown into confusion as a result of an unforeseen incident. This incident leads the 'little man' to reappraise his current circumstance and habits, leading him towards an understanding of universal truth and, consequently, spiritual freedom.¹⁶⁶ This technique is not restricted to *The Overcoat*: for example, in *Dead Souls*, Chichikov is introduced as a

...fair-to-middlin' sort...neither too stout nor too thin; you couldn't say he was old, but still he wasn't what you might call any too young either. His arrival created no stir whatever in the town of N— and was not coupled with any remarkable event.¹⁶⁷

Chichikov is unremarkable, and is absolutely devoid of a thorough description or identity. Furthermore, take Akaky Akakyevich in *The Overcoat*: as the 'little man', Akaky Akakyevich is an overlooked, low-ranking government official; he is looked down on, and bullied by his colleagues. The unexpected event in *The Overcoat* is Akaky Akakyevich's need for a new coat. This throws his life into confusion as he changes his habitual ways in order to save the money to buy it. Upon buying it, his colleagues, so impressed with his fine coat, throw him a party to celebrate. Akaky Akakyevich has never been out alone before at night and begins to see things that he has never seen before:

¹⁶⁴ Nalimova, op. cit., p. 114.

¹⁶⁵ Nalimova, *ibid.*, p. 117.

¹⁶⁶ Nalimova, *ibid.*, pp. 118–119.

¹⁶⁷ Nikolai Gogol, trans. Bernard Guilbert Guerney, *Dead Souls* (New Haven, London: Yale University Press, 1996), p. 1.

his eyes are opened.¹⁶⁸ This spiritual awakening causes him to see the world more clearly, as he passes from dark isolation into life and light:¹⁶⁹

Akaky Akakyevich regarded all this with wonderment. It was several years since he had stepped out on to the street in the evening. He paused to examine with interest a picture in the brightly lit window of a shop, which depicted a beautiful woman removing a shoe.¹⁷⁰

Ustvol'skaya is similarly interested in the endeavours of the 'little' people. This is shown through her inclusion of an anonymous narrator, as well as the suffering expressed by the individual voices of the instruments in her work (not least by the wordless scream into space by this narrator in Symphony No. 2). Like Gogol, however, these individual voices are representative of a far more harrowing vision of humanity from which a spiritual awakening is required. Ustvol'skaya attempts this spiritual awakening through her expression of this harrowing vision in her music. David Kettle describes how Ustvol'skaya's aggressive depiction of her torturous view of the world results in spiritual ritual, whilst providing a commentary on Composition No. 2:

Ustvol'skaya's Composition No. 2 'Dies irae' (1972–3), for the unlikely combination of eight double basses, piano and hammered wooden cube, feels almost like a spiritual rite with its harrowing, incessant dissonances and terrifying climaxes.¹⁷¹

In essence, both Gogol and Ustvol'skaya represent the darkest aspects of human life in order to achieve a sense of spiritual transcendence. The struggle was deeply personal for both. Gogol wrote 'To concoct nightmares – I also did not concoct them, those nightmares suppressed my own soul: whatever was in the

¹⁶⁸ Nikolai Gogol, trans. Christopher English, 'The Overcoat', *Plays and Petersburg Tales* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), pp. 115–146.

¹⁶⁹ Richard Peace, 'Introduction', *Plays and Petersburg Tales* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), p. xx.

¹⁷⁰ Gogol, *The Overcoat*, op. cit., p. 131.

¹⁷¹ David Kettle, 'Ustvol'skaya: Composition No. 2 "Dies irae", Grand Duet, Piano Sonata No. 6', *The Strad* <<http://www.thestrاد.com/cpt-reviews/ustvol'skaya-composition-no-2-dies-irae-grand-duet%E2%80%A0-piano-sonata-no-6%E2%80%A1/>> (accessed on 29/05/2015).

soul emerged from it'¹⁷², a sentiment that echoes Ustvol'skaya's endeavours to represent her deepest feelings that came from her 'innermost soul'.¹⁷³

A further parallel between these two artists can be seen in their attitude towards how their art is received by others. Ustvol'skaya always had disdain for those who overcomplicated – or, more seriously, misunderstood – her music through analysis. This was also a concern for Gogol. In Paris in 1836, Gogol wrote to his friend Mikhail Pogodin (Russian historian, 1800–1875):

I see only an awesome and truthful posterity pursuing me with the terrible question: 'Where is the real thing by which it is possible to judge you?' And in order to prepare the answer to it I am prepared to condemn myself to anything, to a mendicant, wandering life, to the deep and uninterrupted isolation which from this time forth I am bearing everywhere with myself... .. It isn't the poet's business to worm his way into the world's marketplace. Like a silent monk he lives in the world without belonging to it, and his pure unspoiled soul can only converse with God.¹⁷⁴

Like Gogol, Ustvol'skaya often stated that her private inspiration came only from God, writing to Hans-Ulrich Duffek: 'I give all my might, begging God for help in my creative work.'¹⁷⁵ But the parallel can be taken a step further: like Gogol's *The Overcoat*, Ustvol'skaya's music also expresses the condition of society as a whole. It is worth bringing to mind, once more, the anonymous cantor, for example, in Ustvol'skaya's Symphony No. 2, who depicts a suffering and anguished version of Man screaming into space on behalf of humanity.¹⁷⁶

This preoccupation with expressing the wider condition of Man was also inevitably to have a very profound experience on both artists' personal lives too. Both Gogol and Ustvol'skaya became obsessed with the notion of not only bettering humanity, but also bettering themselves. In Ustvol'skaya's case, her self-betterment through focus on God can be seen through her compulsion to

¹⁷² N. V. Gogol, *Selected Passages from Correspondences with Friends* (Nashville, Tennessee: Vanderbilt University Press, 1969), p. 287.

¹⁷³ Letter from Ustvol'skaya to Duffek dated 29/09/1988, held at the PSS and accessed by the author 14/10/2008.

¹⁷⁴ Carl Proffer ed., *Letters of Nikolai Gogol* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1967), p. 65.

¹⁷⁵ Letter by Ustvol'skaya dated 17/04/1994, entitled 'Moi mysli o tvorchestvye' ['Thoughts About the Creative Process'] held at the PSS, accessed by the author 10/10/2009.

¹⁷⁶ Voormans dir., op. cit..

retain uncompromising spiritual integrity in her compositions. Her motivation was personal, as well as speaking for humanity. ('I put my entire 'I' into my works...I have my creative work, I have my music, only mine!'¹⁷⁷) Her attempts at self-betterment can also be seen through her refusal to publish works that she did not deem worthy enough to count in a list of her primary works. Bagrenin observes: 'Ustvol'skaya composed a great deal in the 1960s. But the only work she considered worthy to be included in a list of her primary works was Duet. I tore up many scores in 1965 on her insistence.'¹⁷⁸ But, unlike Ustvol'skaya, Gogol wrote explicitly about his private quest for self-betterment:

Only with the help of reason did I believe that, which others understand with pure faith and in which until now I believed somewhat vaguely and unclearly. Also, the analysis of my own soul brought me here: I saw with mathematical clarity that to speak and to write of man's higher senses, merely using one's imagination, is impossible: it is necessary to contain in myself at least a small grain of it; in other words — I must become better.¹⁷⁹

How, then, is this expressed in their respective arts? Ustvol'skaya, as already observed, implements exaggeration and extremity in her music as a device to shake the listener into becoming involved in her ritualistic performance, and a device to convey the unearthly. Gogol, likewise, includes lavish hyperbole (note, for example, Akaky Akakyevich's inability to write anything that does not involve merely copying, the fact he has no outside interests whatsoever, and the lengths he will go to save money). Ustvol'skaya and Gogol also incorporate the absurd: in Ustvol'skaya's case, through her instrumentation choices and use of extreme musical language, and in Gogol's, the hyperbole that borders upon the absurd, which is taken to greater heights through the return of Akaky Akakyevich's ghost. Ironically, Akaky Akakyevich is more alive when he is dead: his true spiritual awakening has been through death. Ustvol'skaya takes this subject of death and her preoccupation with the Day of Judgement even further than Gogol, and loses his semi-comic depiction of

¹⁷⁷ Ustvol'skaya, 'Thoughts About the Creative Process', op. cit..

¹⁷⁸ Bagrenin, <<http://ustvol'skaya.org/eng/precision.php>> (accessed 26/05/2015).

¹⁷⁹ N. V. Gogol, *Collected Works in 7 Volumes* (Nashville, Tennessee: Vanderbilt University Press), p. 446.

death (see Composition No. 2). Nevertheless, redemption *through* death is a concern of both artists.

The return of Akaky Akakyevich's ghost is the secondary plot in *The Overcoat*, which creates a sense of 'riddle' in this story. This creates a mismatch of form as Gogol does away with the pattern of a conventional story: Gogol is an innovative artist, pushing the boundaries of established literature and creating his new forms. The 'ghost story' at the end acts (to use a musical metaphor) as a coda to the story. Gogol also extends orthodox vocabulary (such as Akaky Akakyevich's mother's names, 'Belobryushkova', an improbable sounding surname, derived from the Russian for *white-bellied*)¹⁸⁰ and pushes the boundaries of grammatical construction. For example, he extends hyperbolic sentences to great lengths:

Even at the hour when the grey St Petersburg sky is shrouded in total darkness and all its tribes of functionaries have dined and sated themselves, each in his own way, in accordance with his means and culinary preferences, when the clerkdom of St Petersburg are resting from the departmental scratching of quills and from the fear and bustle of their own and their colleagues' essential duties and from all the inessential and superfluous work voluntarily undertaken by those of a restless disposition, at that hour when the officials are hastening to devote their remaining free time to the pursuit of pleasure: the more intrepid dashing to the theatre; some roaming the streets, peeking under the ladies' natty bonnets; some passing the evening addressing compliments to an attractive maiden, the star of a small constellation of clerks; some, and this is their most common occupation, simply setting off to a colleague's apartment on the third or fourth floor, where he occupies two small rooms and a hall and kitchen with one or two pretensions of fashion, a lamp or some other knock-knack, obtained at the costs of many a sacrificed dinner and night on the town; in other words, even at that hour when all officials disperse to the small apartments of their friends to play a stormy game of whist, sipping tea out of glasses and eating cheap rusks, smoking long churchwarden pipes, and, while the cards are being dealt, relaying some slander from the circles of high society, which the average Russian is always, irrespective of his state, quite powerless to resist, or even, when there is nothing else to talk about, retelling the age-old joke about the commandant who is informed that the tail of the horse on Falconet's monument has been docked – that is to say, even at that hour when the rest of the world is avid for entertainment Akaky Akakyevich would not permit himself any such frivolity.¹⁸¹

¹⁸⁰ Gogol, *ibid.*, p. 346.

¹⁸¹ Gogol, *The Overcoat*, *op. cit.*, pp. 119–120.

This disproportionately long sentence conveys Gogol's formation of new grammatical constructions as it exaggerates the bustling activity of St Petersburg's nightlife, to which Akaky Akakyevich is blind. However, the form of this sentence also demonstrates the importance of rests in Gogol's prose. The short phrases divided by commas form the basic building blocks of his paragraphs. The rhythms of his sentences are thus accented irregularly and it is this irregularity that characterises his prose. This notion of using small, basic motives as the building blocks of a grander structure is subsequently taken up by Ustvolskaya. The repetition and exploitation of short melodic cells determines the overall, irregular form of Ustvolskaya's work. The general pauses that litter her work mirror Gogol's full stops and echo the emphasis that Gogol places on rests.¹⁸²

Ustvolskaya's Piano Sonata No. 5 is a suitable piece through which to explore this Gogolian 'sentence structure'. Piano Sonata No. 5 is divided into ten sections, each of which has a 'character' of its own which generally contrasts with the section that precedes it or follows on. There is a dominance of the crotchet beat and, as with all her other pieces written in her mature style, there are no bar lines or time signatures. This gives Ustvolskaya absolute freedom in terms of her metric, temporal and rhythmic pallet. Keeping with the characteristics of many of her mature works, the crotchet beat is of central importance throughout the work: there is very little syncopation. The work opens with a loud, aggressive motif that passes between the hands; it is repeated before a half-length version of the same motif appears. Each time the motif appears, it is separated by a rest worth four crotchets and includes – rather unusually for a piano part – a 'breath' marked. An examination of just this first part immediately evokes a comparison with speech. It is as if this first line is one of Gogol's sentences, created by the repetition of the short motifs and separated by breath marks rather than commas.

The second section of Piano Sonata No. 5 continues with this idea. The section can be divided into five musical lines, which are separated by (again) a breath mark and a sustained D \flat , marked *piano*. These musical lines are varied

¹⁸² For a detailed comparison of Gogol's written word and Ustvolskaya's rhythmic constructs, see Nalimova, op. cit., pp. 119–122.

in length and consist of a meandering crotchet line (sometimes with only one musical voice and sometimes two). The first musical ‘sentence’ once more includes a ‘comma’ in the middle of the line (a crotchet rest). The resemblance to natural speech throughout the piece is striking (further enhancing Ustvolskaya’s connection to the *znamenny raspev* (see Chapter 5). It is almost as if each section of the work is a different ‘paragraph’, the slight change of subject marked here by the change in musical mood. Ustvolskaya, however, has an advantage over Gogol, as a result of their respective media. The seventh section of Piano Sonata No. 5 starts with the presentation of the ‘sentence’ in the right hand, before a fragmented, short motif appears in the second voice in the left hand. Ustvolskaya can introduce an element of polyphony that Gogol cannot. Despite the introduction of (admittedly limited) polyphony, the piece still retains a ‘literary’ feel: the second voice merely participates in the rhythmic pattern Ustvolskaya has already constructed.

Ex. 2.14: Musical ‘Sentence’: Piano Sonata No. 5, beginning of Section 7, Right hand

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It is unsurprising that Ustvolskaya felt a certain affinity with Gogol. Both struggling artists from St Petersburg, their kinship transcends the temporal limitations that divide them. Both artists were concerned with the deepest despair of human suffering (against the backdrop of their city) and attempted to find a way in which they could grant spiritual awakening and, consequently, complete spiritual freedom. For his time, Gogol was an innovative writer, dispensing with tradition and discovering his own form, both grammatically

and in terms of structure. Ustvolskaya, in exactly the same way, fought against the compositional conventions that came her way and strove to find absolute freedom in the way she could treat her musical syntax. Ustvolskaya deployed the Gogolian technique of long ‘sentences’ created through the treatment of smaller building blocks and the prominence placed on rests.

There is a further literary device that Gogol often implemented that has resonance in the music of Ustvolskaya: repetition.¹⁸³ Akaky Akakyevich’s initial description is a fine example: ‘somewhat pockmarked, somewhat red-haired, he even looked somewhat weak-sighted’ [*neskolko ryabovat, neskolko ryzhevat, neskolko dazhe na vid podslepovat*]. The poor, unfortunate Akaky Akakyevich is merely a product of repetitions. His job is the repetition of other civil servant’s work as he transcribes the work of others: and even his name is a product of repetition. This issue of repetition is taken up by Søren Kierkegaard, as he writes: ‘Repetition signifies freedom itself ... a transcendency, a religious movement by virtue of the absurd, which comes to pass when it has reached the borders of the marvellous.’¹⁸⁴ Ustvolskaya’s extreme music language – in terms of instrumentation, dynamic contrasts and repetitive rhythms – in the same way as Gogol, transcends the constraints of the physical world in order to paint a picture of the spiritual, the fantastical. Yet in *The Overcoat*, repetition is not merely a device to convey the comic-absurd (the same device – repetition – that provided Akaky Akakyevich with his happy, safe life at the beginning of the story, is the very device that sees his demise). So, in Gogol’s prose, aside from representing the absurd, repetition is also a tool for annihilation and violence, conveying the uncompromising and uninterrupted: a brute force that cannot be argued with and which presents an incontestable argument and ultimate destruction: The repetition of the *important personage* that shatters Akaky Akakyevich during his visit to the civil offices also sees the shattering of his identity (‘How dare you speak like that, sir? Where did you get the impudence to speak like that, sir?’). Repetition here encompasses the ability to demolish and these ‘linguistic projectile[s]

¹⁸³ Nalimova, *ibid.*, p. 121.

¹⁸⁴ Walter Lowrie, in his introduction to: Søren Kierkegaard, *Repetition: An Essay in Experimental Psychology* (New York: Harper, 1964), pp. 18–19. The source quoted is an unpublished letter to the reader of *Repetition* now collected in Vol. IV of Kierkegaard’s *Papirer*. Charles C. Bernheimer in ‘Cloaking the Self: The Literary Space of Gogol’s ‘Overcoat’’, *PMLA*, Vol. 90, No. 1 (Jan. 1975), p. 57.

annihilates ... [and] reduces Akaky to a nearly unconscious state, and the freezing St Petersburg weather, Akaky's original enemy, finishes him off.'¹⁸⁵ Ustvolskaya's music also contains an uncompromising truth that remains defiant and strong through her use of repetition. The parallels are unmistakable.

2.4.2: Dostoevsky

Further resonances in Ustvolskaya's work can be found in Russian literature, not least in the figure of Fyodor Dostoevsky (1821–1881), the Christian novelist born in Moscow but working in St Petersburg. Dostoevsky's consideration of Christianity as an integral part of Russian life, rather than a component of the peripheral backdrop (as Christianity is in many English novels) renders it a vital consideration when attempting to identify the motivations and inspirations surrounding him, both personally and artistically.

Dostoevsky's attitude towards a personal faith was constantly changing throughout his difficult life, and this is reflected in his writing. While he painted a luminous impression of atheism through several characters in his early novels, his later writings reflect that, during his later years, he may well have turned to a kind of Christianity through Orthodox nationalism. Richard Chapple, in his article 'A Catalogue of Suffering in the Works of Dostoevsky', argues that the significance of Dostoevsky's faith was far greater than is usually considered. Indeed, in Dostoevsky's letter to N. A. Fonvizina in 1854 he states: 'Even if it were proved to me that Christ was outside the truth, and it was really so that the truth were outside of Christ, then I would still prefer to stay with Christ rather than with truth'.¹⁸⁶ Earlier in his life, as he was awaiting his (mock) execution on the Semenovskiy Square, Dostoevsky reinforced the statements in his letter as he muttered to his atheist companion Speshnev: 'Nous serons avec le Christ' [We shall be with Christ] only to be granted the

¹⁸⁵ Bernheimer, *ibid.*, p. 58.

¹⁸⁶ Richard L. Chapple, 'A Catalogue of Suffering in the Works of Dostoevsky: His Christian Foundation', *The South Central Bulletin: Studies by Members of The South Central Modern Language Association*, Vol. 43, No. 4, (Winter, 1983), pp. 94–99.

retort: ‘un peu de poussière’ [specks of dust].¹⁸⁷ Of course at such a vital moment, where Dostoevsky genuinely awaited death, his words cannot be taken as measured thought, but this deliberation — along with his companion’s retaliation — manifested itself in his art for years to come.¹⁸⁸

In the succeeding years, Dostoevsky was largely preoccupied with the sense of irresolvability and conflict, and his beliefs were constantly in dispute with a conflicting sense of the most austere atheism. Whichever side the writer landed on – and it may well be impossible ever to tell – Dostoevsky’s intellectual commitment to his faith is a significant factor when considering his artistic output. If, indeed, Dostoevsky was a devout Orthodox Christian, then his beliefs must be considered alongside the idea of Orthodoxy as a national religion. As has been touched on previously (and will be hereafter explored in even greater depths), ideas surrounding Russian national identity in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries cannot be contemplated without taking into account the role of the Church. According to Malcolm V. Jones, Dostoevsky’s early childhood was not only influenced by his devout mother, but this was also the time he learned to associate the idea of a deep spirituality with the Russian people.¹⁸⁹ As a child, a wolf was pursuing a young Fyodor when he was rescued by a peasant, named Marey, who tenderly made the sign of a cross over the young child as he strove to comfort him (an account of this widely known story is included in Dostoevsky’s *A Writer’s Diary* in February 1876).¹⁹⁰ Like Ustvolskaya, Dostoevsky’s ideas on religion are not clear cut: on one hand there is his devotion to Russian Orthodoxy and the images of the crucifixion, but there is also the Dostoevskyan belief that Orthodoxy was representative of the masses (an idea that contributed to his rage against the oppression of the peasant classes). As a result, Dostoevsky leaned towards a form of Orthodox Christian Socialism. His years of imprisonment at the Peter and Paul fortress exposed Dostoevsky to the lowest abasement of the Russian people, but through this he was also granted an opportunity to recognise their spiritual worth. Dostoevsky was not a conventional Orthodox Christian – he

¹⁸⁷ Malcolm V. Jones, W. J. Leatherbarrow ed., ‘Dostoevsky and Religion’, *The Cambridge Companion to Dostoevsky* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), p. 148.

¹⁸⁸ Jones, *ibid.*, pp. 148–149.

¹⁸⁹ Jones, *ibid.*, p. 159.

¹⁹⁰ Fyodor Dostoevsky, Gary Saul Morson ed., trans. Kenneth Lantz, *A Writer’s Diary* (Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 2009), p. 131.

even spent time studying Islam – and was keen to see his Christian beliefs in a wider context, alongside a more modern approach to theology. Yet he retained a certain kinship with Orthodoxy until the end of his life. He argued that, in contrast to Western Christianity where the Catholic Church had inherited legalism and individualism from Rome, Orthodoxy preserved *sobornost*, a ‘spiritual oneness’.¹⁹¹

Like Dostoevsky, Ustvolskaya was not overtly Orthodox, but she was devoutly – even obsessively – religious, and her music is always concerned with the Christian God. Ustvolskaya and Dostoevsky also have in common the idea of a *sobornost* that could only truly be found in Orthodox theology and, consequently, in the deep spirituality of the Russian people, aside from the influence of state. Dostoevsky’s Christian Socialism is constantly professed throughout his novels, which convey the tremendous degradation of human suffering. Like English author Charles Dickens (1812–1870), Dostoevsky uses his social commentary to convey the injustice that is found in human suffering. In a similar fashion, Ustvolskaya uses her compositions to give a voice to the most desperate form of spiritual suffering. However, the connection does not end there: both Ustvolskaya and Dostoevsky believed in the redemptive power of suffering: suffering becomes the medium through which God’s absolution can be found. In terms of Dostoevsky, we see this with characters such as Sonya in *Crime and Punishment*, a prostitute who is working in St Petersburg to support her family. In contrast to the main protagonist she is no intellectual, yet she is the first person to whom Raskolnikov admits his crime of murder and, indeed, the agent through which he begins his own journey of redemption. Sonya thus becomes one of Dostoevsky’s first saintly characters or *yurodivyi* (‘holy fool’). Her life is based upon her acceptance of life (and, thus, her suffering) rather than her desire to fight against it: this is in stark contrast to Raskolnikov who is too concerned with taking on the role of God himself. Through Ustvolskaya’s music, we also understand that our acceptance of suffering is the necessary agent to bring us redemption. In order to present the

¹⁹¹ *Sobornost* is a term originally used by Ivan Kireevsky (literary critic and philosopher: 1806–1856) and Alexei Khomyakov (theologian, poet, critic: 1804–1860) of the Slavophile movement to convey the need for unity and cooperation amongst people. Often understood to include Orthodox values in direct opposition to the emphasis on individualism found in the West (from Aristotle), the idea of cooperation, and a set of common convictions underlines *sobornost*.

necessary supplications before God and be granted absolution, one can only accept the physical and spiritual torments that are set before you in this world.

Nineteenth- and twentieth-century St Petersburg – despite the socio-political changes that had occurred between the creation of Dostoevsky's novels and Ustvolskaya's mature compositions – was certainly an appropriate place from which such a philosophy could arise, and further connects the two artists. Dostoevsky and Ustvolskaya both implement the idea of an extreme theatricality that is designed to shock and to convey the horrors they have experienced, of which the history of St Petersburg is never short. In such socio-political turmoil, Dostoevsky and Ustvolskaya – in their respective times – both attempted to convey the refuge of their spirituality in their art: this is never more evident than in their portrayal of suffering. To both Ustvolskaya and Dostoevsky, suffering is the summation of life and is integrally instrumental in terms of God's relationship with Man: suffering is part of the atonement required from God for sin.¹⁹² Both Dostoevsky and Ustvolskaya acknowledge the requirement of repentance (as a result of the initial realisation of transgression) in order to achieve expiation of sin.

The initial stimuli for suffering are varied but the main reasons behind suffering are thus summarised by Chapple: 1) recognition of transgression; 2) involvements in the torments and suffering of others; 3) greed and ambition; 4) lack of faith; 5) pride; 6) the inability to love.¹⁹³ In Dostoevsky's novels, the personal journey of the characters traces the struggles that arise as a result of the suffering process. Take, for example, Raskolnikov in *Crime and Punishment*. After murdering a pawnbroker, Raskolnikov experiences intense suffering as a result of broken pride (and perhaps some moral failure) but he (like many other of Dostoevsky's characters) does not know where to turn to atone for his serious transgression. Many of Dostoevsky's characters simply do not know which way to turn to receive a pardon: Raskolnikov finds no end to his suffering until he realises his fondness towards Sonya. Raskolnikov is only 'saved' by his conversion to brotherly love: a Christ-like virtue that becomes a requirement for redemption. This is a sentiment that runs straight through

¹⁹² William Hubben, *Four Prophets of Our Destiny: Kierkegaard, Dostoevsky, Nietzsche, Kafka* (Ohio: Collier Books, 1962).

¹⁹³ Chapple, op. cit., p. 94.

Ustvol'skaya's music: Ustvol'skaya's narrators – or indeed instrumental voices – are not merely pleading for themselves but represent a universal supplication, and thus plead on behalf of all of humanity for universal forgiveness. Through her music, Ustvol'skaya provides a route through which the listener can bring the focus back to God, to whom humanity should be answerable.

Ustvol'skaya takes this one step further still: she takes the transgressions of the world upon herself – perhaps even to the level of self-abasement – with personally destructive consequences (which demonstrates Chapple's second category of suffering). Similar to characters in Dostoevsky's novels (such as Raskolnikov, as he seeks civil punishment to atone for his crime) Ustvol'skaya brought suffering upon herself (for example, her removal from the composing circle in St Petersburg, her refusal to write music for the state in her later years, and the bitter end to her relationships with many prevalent figures, including Shostakovich and Malov). This spread to her compositional activity. In the words of Bagrenin: 'Ustvol'skaya was very demanding of her output'.¹⁹⁴ In light of her concern over society's transgressions as a whole (not to mention the sins of the society in which she was forced to live) Ustvol'skaya's quasi-masochistic self-abasement was also a punishment for the sins of the whole of society. This is the same as the male protagonist in Dostoevsky's *A Gentle Creature* who chooses a career as a pawnbroker as a way to punish himself for a debasing experience in the army. In turn, the protagonist is punishing the whole of society for his lost honour. As Chapple puts it: 'By deliberately going beneath society he can in his own mind, stand above it'.¹⁹⁵ This is remarkably similar to Ustvol'skaya's personal life and notorious hermitic existence: by separating herself from society and opting for a poverty-stricken existence rather than the lifestyle of a successful Soviet composer, Ustvol'skaya was, in her own mind, rising above the corruption of society that she witnessed in every step of her composing journey.

¹⁹⁴ Bagrenin, via e-mail, translated and received via Bakhmin, 09/06/2010. Translation slightly amended by the present author.

¹⁹⁵ Chapple, op. cit., pp. 97–98.

2.4.3: Thomas Mann's Doctor Faustus

*Art that 'joins the folk', that makes the needs of the crowd, of the average man, of small minds, its own, will end in misery, and such needs will become a duty, for the sake of the state perhaps; to allow the only kind of art that the average man understands is the worst small-mindedness and the murder of mind and spirit.*¹⁹⁶

Instead of an epilogue to his monograph *Variations on the Theme: Galina Ustvol'skaya*, Bokman – rather surprisingly – chose to add a chapter on Thomas Mann (1875–1955). Ustvol'skaya did speak to Bokman about Mann with admiration, although it is unlikely that she read his novels at the genesis of her career as, although *Doctor Faustus* was originally published in 1947, it was not published in Russia until the 1960s. Besides, as Bokman points out, Ustvol'skaya's compositional style was already established by her First Piano Sonata (1947), written before the publication in German of *Doctor Faustus*. Yet, interestingly, correspondence with Bagrenin does confirm that Ustvol'skaya had read *Doctor Faustus*,¹⁹⁷ and the Russian publication date of *Doctor Faustus* does coincide with her compositional 'break' in the 1960s from which her mature style arose. From the 1970s onwards, Ustvol'skaya fiercely developed her mature style by making her musical vocabulary more extreme. This creates the possibility that the ideas behind Mann's Leverkühn could well have been an influence on her work.

After completing his book, Bokman happened to come across a letter by Mann, where he writes about a composition of Adrian Leverkühn (the hero of his novel *Doctor Faustus*). The following excerpt is of particular interest:

¹⁹⁶ Thomas Mann, trans. H. T. Lowe-Porter, *Doctor Faustus: The Life of the German Composer Adrian Leverkühn as Told by a Friend* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1948), p. 339. Mann is usually regarded in his relation to the Schoenbergian school and it is not the author's intention to negate this clear connection, nor to link Ustvol'skaya to Schoenberg through this connection. Rather this sub-chapter is included as a further stream of influence that Mann's *Doctor Faustus* was to have upon the musical world.

¹⁹⁷ Bagrenin, via e-mail, translated and received via Bakhmin, 09/06/2010.

I have a notion of something satanically religious, demonically devout, at once stringently disciplined and criminally loose, often mocking art, also something reaching back to the primitive and the elemental, abandoning bar divisions, even the order of tonalities (trumpet glissandi); furthermore, something scarcely performable: ancient church modes, *a capella* choruses which must be sung in non-tempered tuning, so that scarcely a tone or interval on the piano occurs.¹⁹⁸

It has already been frequently repeated in this chapter that Ustvolskaya's personal spiritual convictions shaped her work and, like Dostoevsky, Ustvolskaya was wildly expressing the *demonic* suffering of her people through her music. Ustvolskaya's reclusive approach to both life and work demonstrates her personally devout nature, which is mirrored in the extremity of her music: there is no room for compromise. Ustvolskaya was attracted to monastic living (using texts by the monk Hermannus Contractus in three of her five symphonies, Losev's philosophy, and the relationship struck up with Dullaghan, as well as her self-imposed discipline and social isolation). As Georg Lukács puts it in his essay *The Tragedy of Modern Art*, Leverkühn is preoccupied by his 'monk-like repudiation of the affairs of the men of his day',¹⁹⁹ which can be entirely paralleled by Ustvolskaya's determination to separate herself from both traditional compositional conventions, and the compositional activities of her fellow composers. Lukács writes further of Leverkühn's artistic conundrum:

Adrian Leverkühn knows quite well what the real historical situation of music (art or intellectual life in general) is in his day. Not only does he know this, but gives it his constant and energetic thought. Every stylistic problem springs from this preoccupation. The time, the present is at every point inconducive to art, to music — how then is it possible to create music of a really high artistic order without breaking free of one's time, without firmly and actively renouncing it.²⁰⁰

And this is exactly what Ustvolskaya strove to do: break away from the restrictions of convention and separate herself artistically from the constraints of her time (including Shostakovich's influence and the direction commanded

¹⁹⁸ Richard Winston, Clara Winston, eds. and trans., *Letters of Thomas Mann (1889–1955)* (New York: Alfred A Knopf, 1971), p. 496.

¹⁹⁹ Georg Lukács, trans. Stanley Mitchell, 'The Tragedy of Modern Art', *Essays on Thomas Mann* (Whitstable, Kent: Whitstable Litho Ltd., 1979), pp. 47–97.

²⁰⁰ Lukács, *ibid.*, p. 65.

from her by the state). These attempts certainly were not without discomfort as there were many times in her life when Ustvol'skaya even went without food due to her refusal to take commissions or establish herself as an official composer. Her denunciation of Shostakovich (Chapter 4) did not endear her to the remainder of the music world at all, but Ustvol'skaya's endeavours were solely an attempt to achieve the same as Leverkühn: to create music of a high artistic order.

However, there are further reverberations that are of equal significance. Take, for example, Leverkühn's 'mocking art': the circus-like instrumental combinations, of – for example – the piccolo and tuba in Composition No. 1 often take Ustvol'skaya's music to the level of absurdity. The detailed instruction that Ustvol'skaya insists upon in her scores resonates entirely with Mann's 'stringent discipline', yet at the same time, her reluctance to adhere to tradition or conventions, such as key signatures and bar lines, render her music 'criminally loose'. The 'primitive' cries of her narrator in Symphony No. 2, and the wailing of the crotchet pulsations in all her more disciplined music since 1970, contribute to the feeling of the 'primitive and elemental', particularly when placed alongside her use of the ancient *znamenny raspev* (through its kinship with Russian folksong, see Chapter 5), which mirrors Mann's 'ancient church modes'. Similar to Leverkühn, Ustvol'skaya dispenses with 'bar lines and the order of tonalities' (through her cluster technique), a combination that – although it hardly makes her work 'scarcely performable' – certainly provides a challenge to the traditional musician because of the sheer physicality required from the performer. Indeed, Mann's description is so remarkable that one would be forgiven for imagining he was describing Ustvol'skaya's music itself.

Mann's *Doctor Faustus* is a novel that is primarily concerned with the young composer Leverkühn, who aspires to greatness in his artistic output and enters into a Faustian pact in exchange for creative genius. Contracting syphilis, Leverkühn descends into a madness that seems to fuel his desire for musical genius and eventually leads to extraordinary musical creativity. His final years are – in a directly Ustvol'skayan manner – preoccupied with the Day of Judgement. This is not restricted merely to one interpretation but can be read as a commentary of the artistic process and the crisis of the direction of music

in the twentieth century.²⁰¹ To Leverkühn, Beethoven's Ninth Symphony is a breakthrough in the arts (despite his secularisation of music being seen as unfortunate) but the vivid sense of expression that Beethoven passes on to subsequent romantic composers becomes worn out, having lost all its impetus.²⁰² Leverkühn requires a new breakthrough, and starts his mission by ridding music of this sense of excessive subjectivity. As previously discussed in this chapter, Ustvolskaya's efforts towards a purely objective musical voice resonate with Mann's argument.

Ustvolskaya sees music as the model for the spiritual history of Russia. It is to Ustvolskaya, as it is to Mann, 'paradigmatic for...artistic, cultural, political and spiritual problems in general'.²⁰³ Therefore Ustvolskaya's music has an increased symbolic significance and multiple metaphorical layers to it. What we learn from Ustvolskaya's music – ideas regarding music history (her affinity with Bach, her attempts to achieve objectivity, her devout religious preoccupations) – all reveal to the listener a more profound truth that transcends her music. Ustvolskaya's music embodies a symbolic significance that extends towards her ideas about art and intellectualism in general. Mann uses music as a metaphor to explore the crisis of twentieth-century art, while Ustvolskaya uses music as a metaphor to explore the crisis of humanity. Both Mann (through Leverkühn) and Ustvolskaya come up with the very same musical language through which to resolve their crises; in both cases it involves a stripping down of the current trends of excessive musical expression through a return to simplicity.

In *Doctor Faustus*, Leverkühn explores his ideas of his strict style, a style that commands a 'complete integration of all musical dimensions, their neutrality towards each other due to complete organization'.²⁰⁴ He lays out what is required from his ideas of the strict style:

²⁰¹ For a comprehensive overview of Leverkühn's crisis of twentieth-century art, see Lukács' essay 'The Tragedy of Modern Art', op. cit., which includes a full exploration of this issue.

²⁰² Gunilla Bergsten, trans. Krishna Winston, *Thomas Mann's 'Doctor Faustus': The Sources and Structure of the Novel* (Chicago, London: University of Chicago Press, 1963), p. 142.

²⁰³ Bergsten, *ibid.*, p.139.

²⁰⁴ Bergsten, *ibid.*, p. 168.

One would have to go on from here and make larger words out of the twelve letters, as it were, of the tempered semitone alphabet. Words of twelve letters, certain combinations and interrelations of the twelve semitones, series of notes from which a piece and all the movements of a work must strictly derive. Every word of the whole composition, both melody and harmony, would have to show its relation to this fixed fundamental series ... There would no longer be a free note. That's what I would call 'strict composition'.²⁰⁵

Let us, for now, forget the allusion that Mann is clearly making here to Arnold Schoenberg (1874–1951) and consider it in the context of Ustvolskaya's cluster writing. In each of her dissonant clusters there is, of course, no hierarchy amongst the notes: it is their interrelation that creates the effect of a wall of sound, at the expense of any melody. Examining the idea of Ustvolskaya's 'strict style' even further, one can replace Mann's idea of twelve tones with the idea of Ustvolskaya's basic motifs. These short melodic motifs, which frequent her later works, are persistently repeated to the point where every dimension of the work can be perceived in relation to one of them.

In order to achieve the objectivity for which both Leverkühn and Ustvolskaya strove in order to realise their idea of 'high art', they both sought to break down the musical traditions that were already in place. For Ustvolskaya, this was not because she was undertaking a mission to be actively progressive, but was more a result of not wishing to participate in the – to her mind – unsuccessful musical conventions in their current format. After all, Ustvolskaya's symphonies are a far cry from conventional symphonic traditions. Yet, despite her instrumentation choices, she did not wish for her music to be understood as chamber music. This is an issue that is once more touched upon by Mann:

²⁰⁵ Mann, op. cit., p. 191.

Thus Kretschmar²⁰⁶ lived in the natural, taken-for-granted conviction that music had found its definitely highest manifestation and effect in orchestral composition: and this Adrian [Leverkühn] no longer believed. To the boy of twenty, more than to his elders, the close link of the most highly developed instrumental technique with a harmonic conception was more than a historical view. With him it had grown to be something of a state of mind, in which past and future merged together; the cool gaze he directed upon the hypertrophy of the post-romantic monster orchestra, the need he felt for its reduction and return to the ancillary role that it has played at the time of the preharmonic, the polyphonic vocal music ... Adrian had repeatedly expressed to me the view that the old distinctions between chamber music and orchestral music are not tenable, and that since the emancipation of colour they merge into one another.²⁰⁷

The coinciding aesthetic principles in Ustvolskaya and Mann's work are exceptional, and suggest the question of whether musical development evolves inexorably, regardless of cultural context. Ustvolskaya and Mann were products of very different cultural backdrops, yet both uncovered the very same direction from which to resolve the crisis in twentieth-century music.

2.5: Final Thoughts: East Versus West

It is necessary to recall, in a final enquiry, Ustvolskaya's insistence that she created her musical aesthetic with no influence imposed upon or by her. Certainly, as we have considered her mature musical style, it can be reasonably concluded that her style was very different from anything that went before it or has gone since. However, in terms of her musical aesthetic, there are many great minds that have gone before her (to whose art she had been exposed) or that was created in parallel to her (as a result of the same cultural background) that are worthy of consideration. As John Donne so famously said: 'No man is an island.'²⁰⁸

²⁰⁶ Leverkühn's teacher.

²⁰⁷ Mann, op. cit., p. 501.

²⁰⁸ John Donne, *Devotions upon emergent occasions and seuerall steps in my sickness*, Meditation XVII, 1624.

We can look towards the explanation given by the Russian poet Anna Akhmatova (1889–1966), to understand how many of these parallels were to come about. In ‘Instead of a Preface’, which goes before her *Requiem*, Akhmatova explains how her epic poem came about through an incident in her life.

In the terrible years of the Yezhov terror, I spent seventeen months in the prison lines of Leningrad. Once, someone ‘recognized’ me. Then a woman with bluish lips standing behind me, who, of course, had never heard me called by name before, woke up from the stupor to which everyone had succumbed and whispered in my ear (everyone spoke in whispers there):

‘Can you describe this?’²⁰⁹

These brief lines convey exactly how Akhmatova saw her poems as a mouthpiece for the Russian proletariat or, to use Stravinsky’s famous line from an entirely different context, she was the ‘vessel through which’ the horrors of her people passed.²¹⁰ The idea of the artist as spokeswoman for a people is taken to greater heights in the case of Ustvolskaya, where her music does not only express the desperation of the Russian people or the victims of Leningrad, but the whole of humanity (represented, most explicitly, by the narrator in Symphony No. 2). Like Losev, Schopenhauer, Dostoevsky and Gogol, and here in Akhmatova’s *Requiem*, Ustvolskaya used her art to describe the nameless woman’s whispers.

An account of the key aesthetics that shaped Ustvolskaya’s ideas (and consequent musical outcome) has been undertaken yet, as a result of the diversity of these influences bombarding her approach, several other questions naturally arise. It can be seen more tangibly how Ustvolskaya’s and fellow Russian/Soviet artists (such as Losev/Dostoevsky) may surface as a uniquely Russian phenomenon, but what about the Western influences that have here been observed? It is, of course, important to note in this chapter the absence of a great number of twentieth-century Western influences or aesthetic parallels. The Iron Curtain can, of course, be held to account for such a cultural

²⁰⁹ Anna Akhmatova, trans. Judith Hemschemeyer, *The Complete Poems of Anna Akhmatova* (Boston: Zephyr Press, 2006), p. 384.

²¹⁰ Stravinsky used this expression when discussing the composition of *The Rite of Spring*. ‘I am the vessel through which *Le Sacre* passed.’ Igor Stravinsky and Robert Craft, *Expositions and Developments* (London: Faber and Faber, 2009), p. 148.

phenomenon. It forms the foundation for a complicated inquiry: to what extent is Ustvolskaya's music primarily an Eastern reality that includes several Western Influences? Or contrarily, does Ustvolskaya's music exist first and foremost as a branch of western art music with an additionally injected flavour of Russia?

The latter question may seem immediately to contradict the argument that Russia exists as a predominantly Eastern entity that looks towards the West. However, Richard Taruskin's chapter 'Entoiling the Falconet'²¹¹ is devoted to the orientalism of a *Western* Russia: he describes a Russia that turns its head towards the East. In both these chapters, grouped together under a sub-headed heading of 'Self and Other', Taruskin summarises what seems to be a very confused perspective of what exactly constitutes the 'self' and what constitutes the 'other', and this has huge relevance in terms of locating Ustvolskaya: 'Russia, poised between the unambiguously Western and the unambiguously Eastern, viewing both and viewed by both, as other, could never locate or define its self unambiguously with respect to either'.²¹²

In recent decades, Western ignorance of the Soviet avant-garde has wrongly led many musical commentators to presume that compositional life in the Soviet Union had declined completely, firmly stamped out by Stalin's purges, which obliterated the avant-garde of the 1920s.²¹³ Amy Nelson observes:

Mention twentieth-century Russian music, and the name of the 'giants' – Igor Stravinsky, Sergei Prokofiev and Dmitrii Shostakovich – quickly come to mind. Mention artistic life under the Soviet regime, and images of terror, censorship and the repression of intellectual freedom leap to the foreground.²¹⁴

Sure enough, the political period that immediately followed the revolution was responsible for forming the relationship between the state and the intelligentsia, and the aesthetic foundation for socialist realism was offered by the authorities.

²¹¹ Richard Taruskin, *Defining Russia Musically: Historical and Hermeneutical Essays* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997), pp. 152–185.

²¹² Taruskin, *ibid.*, p. 105.

²¹³ Joel Sachs, Malcolm Hamrick Brown ed., *Notes on the Soviet Avant-garde, Russian and Soviet Music: Essays for Boris Schwarz* (Bloomington, Ind.: UMI Research Press, 1984), p. 287.

²¹⁴ Amy Nelson, *Music for the Revolution: Musicians and Power in Early Soviet Russia* (Pennsylvania: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2004), p. xiii.

Presented as accessible to the whole social spectrum of Soviet Russia through its key revolutionary themes, socialist realism consigned Soviet art to a rudimentary, unrefined style that – amidst the stupor of political dictatorship – obstructed diverse, organic evolution from the established histories of art and culture.²¹⁵ Nevertheless, as Nelson puts it:

Musical life in early Soviet Russia was rich and diverse, but lacked the brilliance that had brought celebrity to the Ballet Russes a decade before and the brutal censorship that would attract the world's attention a decade later.

Seen through the prism of what was to come, the twenties often seem to be a prelude to totalitarianism in artistic life.²¹⁶

In fact, the very ideas behind the 1917 revolution resonated with a similar movement in the arts. 'Russian art has never been art for art's sake', Ivashkin explains in his article *Letter from Moscow*, 'but always had subject matter drawn from everyday life; it has always been engaged and moralistic. Russian music therefore always has a tendency toward a nonmusical content'.²¹⁷ According to Ivashkin, a prevalent hallmark of Russian art is its interconnections between historical, social, artistic, spiritual and aesthetic ideals that have become inseparable: these very ideas were inextricably associated with ideas behind Russian art. Ivashkin continues: 'the idea of an ethical connection among and a unity of all generations and social strata on the basis of a shared cultural memory'.²¹⁸ Carving out a position as a St Petersburg composer was not without its troubles but Ustvol'skaya imposed upon herself this obligation, like many Russian artists and philosophers who had gone before her, to articulate the sufferings that the Russian people endured. In the same manner as Losev, Ustvol'skaya saw no separation between the idea of physical suffering and that of spiritual suffering. As musicologist Maria Cizmici writes in her book 'Performing Pain: Music and Trauma in Eastern Europe':

²¹⁵ Alexander Ivashkin, 'Letter From Moscow: Post October Soviet Art: Canon and Symbol', *The Musical Quarterly*, Vol. 74, No. 2 (1990), p. 303.

²¹⁶ Nelson, op. cit., p. xiii.

²¹⁷ Ivashkin, 'Letter From Moscow: Post October Soviet Art: Canon and Symbol', op. cit., p. 305.

²¹⁸ Ivashkin, *ibid.*, p. 304.

Ustvol'skaya's music takes on a quasi-religious response to historical suffering, musically praying for redemption...[the Sixth Piano Sonata] opens up a performance space in which a pianist feels pain, foregrounding the concrete bodily acts and sensations of suffering at a time when the violence of the USSR's past continued to be contested.²¹⁹

Furthermore, Cizmic directly draws parallels between Ustvol'skaya's music and non-physical pain:

At the same time, music circulates within cultural, social and even political fields, standing in relationship to the time and place of its creation – the physical pain a performer feels while learning and performing Ustvol'skaya's Sixth Piano Sonata recalls the ways in which pain figures as an important theme during *glasnost*.²²⁰

Ustvol'skaya, not content with the current trends in late Romanticism or Modernist music, reacted against the conventions that were taught in the Soviet conservatories. In order to achieve a purity of musical language and freedom from cultural corruption that the Soviet regime epitomised, Ustvol'skaya looked to the ritual of the Orthodox Church. At a time where many Russians did not wish to look to the state for national identity, Ustvol'skaya was not alone in finding refuge in the Church, but she went even further in her approach by including references to primitive, pagan rites that escaped even the corruption that had infiltrated the church.

The aesthetic choices that Ustvol'skaya made therefore distinctly locate her as a Russian artist, as we contemplate the unique – and extreme – cultural context from which her music arose. This chapter has thus discussed Ustvol'skaya's compositional and aesthetic approaches, which incorporate philosophical thoughts and methods that are unique to the Russian character, the Russian psyche and the socio-political context. But some Western influences were of equal importance when it came to shaping Ustvol'skaya's music. Schopenhauer and Mann are both examples of figures who were engaged with crises in the arts and, respectively, forged their response to it through their own creative and philosophical outlook. It is the combination of Eastern and Western factors that shape the aesthetics surrounding her music, and ultimately places it in terms of her personal context.

²¹⁹ Maria Cizmic, *Performing Pain: Music and Trauma in Eastern Europe* (USA: Oxford University Press, 2012), p. 91.

²²⁰ Cizmic, *ibid.*, p. 25.

Tradition or Revolution? A Very Russian Heritage

Chapter 3

Kira Yuzhak, in her article *Observations on the Style of Galina Ustvolskaya*,²²¹ articulates the uniqueness of Ustvolskaya's compositions and attempts to identify the origins of this uniqueness. It is Yuzhak's argument that there are three points that mark the genesis of Ustvolskaya's music: 1) expressionism, 2) polyphonic music, and 3) Russian folklore (including archaic examples such as the *znamenny raspev*, see Chapter 5). In Chapter 2, the notions of objectivity and expressionism have already been discussed, so it is unnecessary to inspect them further here. Chapter 3 will, however, be an examination of the implications of Yuzhak's latter two categories. How is it possible for a composer both to remain true to the idea of traditional polyphonic music and, at the same time, truly express Russian folk traditions? If it really is true, as Yuzhak suggests, that this is the case in Ustvolskaya's music, then from this combination numerous additional questions arise: does the inclusion of folkloric music pollute or enhance traditional genres? Is the inclusion of folk music a return to archaic types of music, or a progression as it revolutionises traditional forms? What are the nationalistic implications? Does Ustvolskaya's music become more 'Russian' through these inclusions, or can her music only be categorised as 'western' art music? How does this relate to the already-established lineage of Russian music?

No one can dispute Yuzhak's claims that the multiplicity of sources that shaped Ustvolskaya's music resulted in a unique, powerful force. Through the influences already identified, Ustvolskaya manages to combine the archaic musical language of an ancient Russian tradition with the traditions of western art music, as well as with the revolutionary voices of the twentieth century. So where does that leave her music? Traditional or revolutionary? Chapter 3 is – rather appropriately in terms of Russian history – divided broadly into these

²²¹ Kira Yuzhak, A. N. Kryukov ed., *'Iz nablyudeniya nad stilyem G. Ustvolskoy'* ['Observations on the Style of G. Ustvolskaya'] *Stilevyye Tendentsii v sovetsloy teorii 1960–1970gg* [*Stylistic tendencies in Soviet Music of the 1960s–1970s*] (Leningrad: LGITMik, 1979), pp. 83–103.

two sections, Tradition and Revolution, in order to investigate exactly what forces were acting as the stimuli for Ustvol'skaya's unique music.

3.1: Tradition

3.1.1: A Russian Lineage

In order to address fully Ustvol'skaya's position in the context of Russia's musical lineage, it is first necessary to evaluate exactly what is meant by 'Russianness' in music. In Ivashkin's article 'The Paradox of Russian Non-Liberty'²²² this concept of 'Russianness' is extensively explored in terms of twentieth-century composition: Ivashkin expresses the Russian perception of culture and art as a substitute for the reality of life.²²³ It is evident that although this idea of Russianness is apparent throughout the thriving music tradition established during the nineteenth century, the restrictions imposed as a result of living in the Soviet Union only served to nurture this outlook. To many artists working amid the restrictions of the Soviet times, spirituality could be found in artistic expression and, resultantly, art and culture substituted reality, as actuality became illusion. According to Ivashkin:

For the Russian style is, first of all, a metaphysical one. It tries to ensure that all events, all the written notes, all the words or colours do not conceal the content of the work. The real content, the real tensions are *between* the words, the colours, or the sounds.²²⁴

The mystical qualities of numerous Soviet compositions (such as the work of Sofia Gubaidulina (b. 1931) and Arvo Pärt (b. 1935)) certainly reinforce Ivashkin's assertion. Indeed, despite her release of public Socialist Realist works, Ustvol'skaya's more personal music that was composed alongside these works that were not published or performed for a further twenty years, fully fit Ivashkin's idea of the Russian style. Interestingly, in direct contradiction to the

²²² Ivashkin, 'The Paradox of Russian Non-Liberty', op. cit., pp. 543–556.

²²³ Ivashkin, *ibid.*, p. 543.

²²⁴ Ivashkin, *ibid.*, pp. 545–546.

imposed values of the Soviet regime, these works become increasingly spiritual in nature as they are considered chronologically.

The overwhelming spiritual nature of the Russian style, however, was firmly established before the introduction of Soviet policy. Take, for example, Scriabin's mystical, philosophical thought in the Silver Age, which saturated his philosophy and music. Scriabin seemed to harbour very little concern about his place in an historical canon but saw his art as a mystical exception to the norm.²²⁵ Scriabin noted that it was of little use for one single individual to achieve spiritual transfiguration. To Scriabin, universal cosmic transformation must be performed in totality: individual ecstasy could suspend time but only temporarily, as it only momentarily broke the chain of multiple existences. Freedom could only be granted as a result of universal transfiguration.²²⁶ It was Scriabin's impulse of combining sexual passion with spiritual instinct that articulated his arrival at such sensual philosophy: he was mixing the physical world with the spiritual, a key conviction in terms of the Russian style and, most significantly, in terms of Ustvolskaya. Scriabin discusses this use of the physical in order to achieve spiritual transcendence: 'Through music and colour, with the aid of perfume, the human mind or soul can be lifted outside or above merely physical sensations in the region of purely abstract ecstasy and purely intellectual speculation'.²²⁷

This amalgamation of the mind and spirit supports Ivashkin's observation of an intermingling of spirituality, culture and everyday life in the Russian mindset. In addition, according to Ivashkin, there is in Russian consciousness a very strong urge to discover the origins of art, something constantly felt in twentieth-century Soviet music. Twentieth-century Russian composers (Ustvolskaya included) were preoccupied with getting in touch with their roots: folkloric traditions, Eastern Orthodox practice, national identity, and acceptance and preservation of the perceived 'Russian mentality'. Ustvolskaya's inclusion of aspects of the *znamenny* chant (Chapter 5) and a ritualistic paganism (Chapter 2) echoes this return to nature: a time of musical

²²⁵ Boris de Schloezer, trans. Nicolas Slonimsky, *Scriabin: Artist and Mystic* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987), p.188.

²²⁶ For a detailed account of how Scriabin hoped to achieve this with his *Mysterium* see: Schloezer, *ibid.*, pp. 179–185.

²²⁷ Robert Rimm, *The Composer-Pianists: Hamelin and the Eight* (New York: Amadeus Press, 2002), p. 115.

purity before the introduction of even temperament or music as superficial entertainment. Znamenny chant's close affinity to the text, and its direction imposed by the human voice, renders it symbolically relevant in terms of music in its purest form (see Chapter 5). The ritualistic quality of Ustvolskaya's writing evokes similar ideas of a time preceding civilisation and culturalisation where God and Man are united in nature. Her appropriation of a natural language therefore introduces the listener to a new *cultural* language. This process requires borrowing the established Western traditions, closely followed by rejecting its values: this destruction drives Russian culture deeper into its own roots.²²⁸ These observations resonate clearly in the context of the Soviet Union. With the eradication of years of culture, art and the intelligentsia, there was a need for cultural survival that would prompt this insistent – and always obvious – preservation of national identity.

It is whilst considering the established Russian symphonic school that Alfred J. Swan insists that the source of the new art music lies solely in Russian folksong and liturgical chant of the Russian Orthodox Church, (a perspective esteemed by many musicologists reacting against a common idea that before Mikhail Glinka (1804–1857), Russian music culture was a cosmic wilderness from which he emerged as somewhat of a miracle).²²⁹ So, in reality, through her implementation of liturgical rituals, not only is Ustvolskaya's music written within the juxtaposed tradition of western art music in Russian – 'the West in the East' – but the very beginnings of Russian art music lie in its folksong and liturgical chant: she is including unadulterated Russianness.

But how exactly can a competent listener identify such traits as 'Russianness' and (consequently) 'Non-Russianness' in music? This is a question that has been extensively discussed by musicologists when addressing the work of Russian/Soviet composers in attempting to establish their ancestry and consequent national identity in music, not least in Taruskin's book *Defining Russia Musically*. To answer these questions we must look back even further in the Russian musical tradition. In the nineteenth century, the lineage of 'authentication' of the Russian art music composer had previously lain with

²²⁸ Ivashkin, 'The Paradox of Russian Non-Liberty', op. cit., p. 555.

²²⁹ Alfred J. Swan, *Russian Music: and its Sources in Folk-Song* (London: John Baker Publishers, 1973), p. 15.

the prestige of the aristocratic classes. The last musician of these generations was Modest Musorgsky (1839–1881) who, although his family was impoverished late in his life by the emancipation of 1861, had needed to work for a living. Needless to say he was resultantly detached from the myth of authenticity created by aristocratic circles and their counterfeit notions of nationalism and ‘true’ Russianness in music.²³⁰ This myth, although contrary to the institutions of the Russian state, had established itself and, according to Taruskin, continues as a widely upheld perspective on Russian music:

It is a myth of otherness.

Tardy growth and tardier professionalisation, remote provenience, social marginalisation, the means of its promotion, even the exotic language and alphabet of its practitioners have always tinged or tainted Russian art music with an air of alterity, sensed, exploited, bemoaned, asserted, abjured, exaggerated, minimised, glorified, denied, revelled in, traded on, and defended against both from within and from without. From without Russian music was (and is) often pre-emptively despised and condescended to (witness the vagaries of Chaikovsky’s critical reception), though just as often it has been the object of intense fascination and of occasional cults and crazes (witness the same Chaikovsky’s ineradicable presence in the concert hall, or the Diaghilev-ignited craze that launched Stravinsky’s spectacular career.²³¹

Although Taruskin is largely sympathetic to the idea that there is a frequent habit of inadvertently attributing inadequacy by perceiving any ‘difference’, the present author considers the identification of this difference to be a necessary practice. It does ostracise the music in question to an extent; however, it is an essential practice in order to answer indispensable critical questions. By questioning the ‘Russianness’ of music, we are not simply consigning Russian music to a position of inferiority: the categorisation is a crucial tool to enable sound discourse on the matter. Bruno Nettl discusses the requisite measurements of music in terms of similarity and difference: ‘The question of degree of difference and similarity is at the base of some of the most fundamental work of historical musicology ... the basic paradigm of mapping world music in time and space.’²³² It is by using this terminology of

²³⁰ Taruskin, *Defining Russia Musically: Historical and Hermeneutical Essays*, op. cit., pp. xi–xxxii.

²³¹ Taruskin, *ibid.*, p. xiv.

²³² Bruno Nettl, *The Study of Ethnomusicology: Twenty-nine Issues and Concepts* (Urbana and

difference that we are enabled to question the ‘geographical’ location of Ustvolskaya’s work, examining the tension between the ‘Eastern’ and ‘Western’ aspects as she writes from within the Russian art music tradition. In Ustvolskaya’s case, there was a physical barrier in the form of the Iron Curtain between herself and Western Europe so she could not progress alongside her European counterparts. Taruskin’s use and explanation of the word ‘otherness’ to describe Russian compositional style is as true of Tchaikovsky’s music as it is of Stravinsky’s or Ustvolskaya’s in the twentieth century.

To investigate further this idea of Russian musical lineage, it is necessary to look back even further than Tchaikovsky and consider the very genesis of Russian art music. The composers of the first Russian art music, who originated this lineage, would have been wholly consumed with the idea of how Russia fitted in to the West, and how it would retain its own values. It is surprising, therefore, that Taruskin has argued that Glinka’s *A Life for the Tsar* (1836) was very much an Italian opera, despite it arising from the very beginnings of the Russian art music tradition. Taruskin states: ‘The style of the Italianized *protyazhnaya* underlies the roles of both of Glinka’s operatic heroines...there is no later Russian composer of opera whose Italianate borrowings are as plain as Glinka’s.’²³³ Although Taruskin may well have a point that elements of the established Italian tradition are manifest in much of Glinka’s work, this position ignores the abundant Russian symbolism constantly palpable in this momentous work. After all, the ‘Russianness’ of Glinka’s composition – and those of the composers who would follow – occurred as a result of an appropriation of Western music and a consequent adaptation, as the Italian genre gradually amalgamated with thoroughly Russian compositional techniques. To reinforce this point, Taruskin’s summary of the impact of Italian opera on several Russian composers mainly includes observations of the (westernised) folksongs in Glinka’s arrangements, rather than the direct correlations between Glinka’s art and his Italian counterparts. However, the issue of Glinka’s acceptance on the international stage, added to the very fact that the operatic genre was borrowed from western tradition, does naturally suggest comparison with activity elsewhere in Europe. Although

Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1983), p. 123.

²³³ Taruskin, *Defining Russia Musically: Historical and Hermeneutical Essays*, op. cit., p. 228.

Glinka did make a conscious effort to ‘compose like a Russian’ when he began *A Life for the Tsar*, most of the music in his autograph is complete with Italian captions. If the account of theatre chronicler Alexander Volf is accepted, as single-out by Taruskin, Glinka was ‘no less carried away than the high society dilettantes when Rubini, Viardot and Tamburini first graced the St Petersburg musical stage in 1843.’²³⁴ Likewise, the overture of his later opera *Ruslan and Lyudmilla* (1842) contains little or no overtly Russian substance, and Lyudmilla’s cavatina and Farlaf’s rondo frankly exhibit their affinity with Italian opera.²³⁵ Although Glinka has justly earned recognition as the foremost symbol of the institution of Russian art music, it cannot be denied that his kinship with the genre of Italian opera deserves a more extensive treatment. Indeed this confirms that if we want to engage with Glinka – or any other Russian composer – it is necessary not only to connect with the Russian influence but also to take the influence of Western Europe equally seriously.

What, then, does this history tell us in terms of Ustvolskaya’s work? It is significant that, at first glance, Ustvolskaya’s official Sikorski catalogue comprises mostly conventionally named works, obviously taken from the western art music tradition: five symphonies, a trio and a piano concerto. But Charles Wilson, in his article regarding twentieth-century symphonic writing, singles out Ustvolskaya’s baptism of several of her works as ‘symphonies’.

²³⁴ Taruskin, *ibid.*, p. 199. Rutger Helmers also examines this opera in terms of Italian operatic conventions employed by Rossini and his Italian successors – which is perhaps better known as the ‘Code Rossini’ – with surprising parallels. Rutger Helmers, *Glinka’s A Life for the Tsar and the Code-Rossini*, paper delivered at BASEES/RMA Russian and Eastern European Music Study Day, RSAMD, Glasgow, 10/02/2007.

²³⁵ Boris Gasparov, *Five Operas and a Symphony: Word and Music in Russian Culture* (New Haven, London: Yale University Press, 2005), p. 30.

While some have continued to grapple with the kinds of formal questions traditionally regarded as symphonic, others have applied the generic title to works which subvert just about all, including more recently established, expectations of the genre. The characteristically ascetic *Fourth* (1985–87) and *Fifth Symphonies* (1989–90) of Galina Ustvolskaya are scored not for orchestra but for small instrumental ensemble and solo voice.²³⁶

There is certainly truth in Charles Wilson's statement: Ustvolskaya's symphonies, on the surface, are indeed vastly dissimilar to conventional symphonic writing. Even the earliest, 'chamber' symphonies from the seventeenth century (written only for strings, with the occasional addition of harpsichord and bassoon continuo) bear little resemblance to Ustvolskaya's small ensembles.²³⁷ Ustvolskaya's self-contained one-movement symphonies are, of course, a far cry from these earliest symphonies that were written in four movements, beginning with an extended opening, then a lyrical, expressive movement, followed by a dance-inspired *Scherzo*, culminating in a fast finale, usually in sonata form.²³⁸ Yet there are still many characteristics, aside from the symphony's musical structure, that, when considered, resonate strongly with Ustvolskaya's symphonies. These other characteristics are suggested by Mark Evan Bonds: 'The symphony was consistently valued for its unique ability to unite the widest possible range of instruments in such a way that no voice predominates and all contribute to the whole.'²³⁹

This assertion can just as easily be applied to the twentieth-century symphonic writing of Ustvolskaya as it can to the orchestrations by Hector Berlioz (1803–1869) in the nineteenth century: take, for example, the *ostinatos* found in her Fifth Symphony, the lack of prevalence of any individual instrumental voice, and a sense of unity between the four contrasting instruments employed. The expansion of the nineteenth-century orchestra paved the way for the exploitation of contrasting timbral effects (Beethoven's symphonies, for example, have an entirely different timbral effect to those of Berlioz). In the very same way, Ustvolskaya uses varying instrumental groups

²³⁶ Jan LaRue, Eugene K. Wolf, Mark Evan Bonds, Charles Wilson, Stanley Sadie and John Tyrrell eds., 'Symphony', *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians* (London: Macmillan, 2001), p. 848.

²³⁷ LaRue, Wolf, Bonds, Wilson, *ibid.*, pp. 813–814.

²³⁸ LaRue, Wolf, Bonds, Wilson, *ibid.*, p. 833.

²³⁹ LaRue, Wolf, Bonds, Wilson, *ibid.*

(by reducing the orchestra) to exploit her own timbral effects and, consequently, accentuate her own individual voice. Nineteenth-century orchestral writing, in all its expansiveness, became a symbol of the expression of a communal sentiment that appealed to a wide audience, going far beyond its status as chamber music in a domestic setting. The sanctity of the symphony as the most elevated art form began – with Beethoven and Mahler – to exist as an institutional projection of the beliefs and aspirations of the composer, rendering it a ‘cosmic’ genre.²⁴⁰ This patently correlates with Ustvolskaya’s ideas concerning the motivation behind and (resulting) magnitude of her work, and resonates with other writers of symphonies in more recent years: ‘Like Mahler, and of course like Ives, Alfred Schnittke envisioned the symphony as a musical universe, enfolding all that is or could be within its octopus embrace.’²⁴¹

It is this magnitude that resonates with the writings and philosophy of the influential musicologist Asafiev, who addresses the idea of symphonic writings in his theses from the early twentieth century. Asafiev’s use of the word *symphonism* permits it to be applied to other genres (i.e. not just symphonies) and, indeed, according to Asafiev, not all symphonies are *symphonic*. Although initially reluctant to define exactly what he meant by *symphonism*, Asafiev later provided this definition:

By defining certain music as symphonic, more precisely, as being saturated with symphonism, we refer to an integral (integral-unitary sound impulse, which is continuous within a given sphere of sound, i.e., within a composition, and proceeds in a series of changing but closely connected musical representations that constantly draw us onward as they have drawn us from point to point, from attainment to attainment—to the ultimate conclusion. Thus we conceive symphonism as a *stream of musical consciousness* (within the sphere of sounds yet to come), where no element is conceived or perceived as being independent from the remaining multitude: when, by means of intuition, the musical-creative entity is contemplated and grasped as a single unit, present in the process of reactions in the sound.²⁴²

²⁴⁰ LaRue, Wolf, Bonds, Wilson, *ibid.*

²⁴¹ Taruskin, *Defining Russia Musically: Historical and Hermeneutical Essays*, op. cit., p. 100.

²⁴² Haas, *Leningrad’s Modernists: Studies in Composition and Musical Thought: 1917–1932*, op. cit.. Boris Asafiev, *Instrumentalnoe tvorchestvo Tchaikovskogo [Instrumental Works of Tchaikovsky]* (Petrograd: Petrogradskaya gosudarstvennaya akademicheskaya filarmoniya, 1922).

To Asafiev, it is not the conventions of the genre that makes a work symphonic, but the term *symphonic* can be applied to any work that is built on the development of contrasting ideas and the conflict that this contrast nurtures. The resolution of these conflicting ideas is ‘likely to take place over time, probably on a grand scale’.²⁴³ Ustvol'skaya's symphonies are therefore, if not symphonies in the traditional, conventional sense of the term, strikingly similar to Asafiev's given definition. Through contrasts and inner turmoil, Ustvol'skaya honours the Asafievan concept of symphonism, an inner truth being gradually revealed throughout her *Symphonies Nos. 2–3* and, more broadly even, throughout all her works.

It must also be noted that Charles Wilson based his article on Shostakovich, Mahler, Paul Hindemith (1895–1963) and Stravinsky's neo-classical symphonies: all early twentieth-century composers with not quite so much of a radical approach to symphonic composing as Ustvol'skaya. The polystylism of Alfred Schnittke (1934–1998) is also mentioned, as symphonic fragments of Haydn and Beethoven are featured in his work. In addition, Charles Wilson mentions the allegiance to Mahler and Bruckner that can be seen in the music of Krzysztof Penderecki (b. 1933), particularly the austere tonal idiom in his ‘*Christmas Symphony*’ – Symphony No. 2 (1980). Essentially, Charles Wilson is measuring twentieth-century symphonies against eighteenth- and nineteenth-century compositions where symphonies can be found in their ‘purest form’. Although there is value in placing compositional work in the context of the established musical canon, it becomes obvious that Ustvol'skaya's symphonic music is too far removed from the symphonic tradition to invite similar comparison. She has seized the elements of the traditional symphony that aid her creative *raison d'être* (such as its ability to articulate communal expression, its cosmic nature and grand gestures), and dispensed with all others. Ustvol'skaya undoubtedly composes within the context of Western music history – utilising, manipulating and evolving genres in a progressive tradition that has continued for centuries. It is interesting to note that in the 1970s, Ustvol'skaya attempted to escape all traditional

²⁴³ Haas, *Leningrad's Modernists: Studies in Composition and Musical Thought: 1917–1932*, op. cit., pp. 203–204.

constraints by inventing her own genre, the *Composition*, free from implication, expectation and consequent judgement. This liberating title exists as a silent protest regarding convention, ultimately existing as a tool to free her from culture itself.

Consideration of Ustvol'skaya in terms of the western art music, tradition coupled with contemplation of Glinka's 'Code Rossini', does not mean that the significance of Russian symbolism should be diminished in any way. Indeed, the very fact that Glinka selected (and consequently appropriated) text by Alexander Pushkin (1799–1837) in his opera *Ruslan and Lyudmilla*, thrusts the context of the whole opera well into the Russian tradition. Glinka had previously set Pushkin's poem 'To ***' ('I remember the wondrous moment') in 1839, rendering it a national icon illuminated in Russian cultural memory (an event that, Gasparov claims, propelled Glinka's musical voice onto an equal plane with Pushkin's words, rendering it 'virtually impossible to recollect Pushkin's words without the sound of Glinka's music'²⁴⁴). Although any previous assertions of definite unconcealed references to the 'Italian style' of *Ruslan and Lyudmilla* are actually reinforced by the composer himself as he compares the radiant *presto* with the overture of Mozart's *Le Nozze di Figaro*, in reality, it is in the very same letter that Glinka insists this *presto* is 'only done in a Russian fashion'.²⁴⁵ If this is not to be considered blatantly contradictory, then perhaps it reveals to us the truth behind Russian composition: the Russian musical style is born of an *appropriation* of western art music. If we use Glinka as the original model, the genres and traditions seized from western art music by a Russian composer are subsequently converted to a uniquely Russian art form through the inclusion of characteristics exclusive to Russian cultural consciousness. Consequently, a new sub-genre of western art music is born, an art that is distinctly rooted in Western traditions yet simultaneously establishes an inimitably Russian voice.

From Glinka to Ustvol'skaya, it is through comprehension and identification of these purely Russian factors and their combination with the heritage of western art music that a cohesive investigation into the roots and individuality of Russian music history can be undertaken. In order to do this,

²⁴⁴ Gasparov, op. cit., p. 28.

²⁴⁵ Gasparov, *ibid.*, p. 30, footnote 27.

the subsequent sections are divided into an exploration of Russian symbolism, and the heritage of western art music.

3.1.2: Tradition: Russian Symbolism

As a milestone in Russian music history (and as it has already here been subjected to brief analysis in terms of the western art music tradition) it is appropriate to use Glinka's *Ruslan and Lyudmilla* as a foundation for an initial investigation into the original ideas for establishing a Russian art music tradition that continued to the twentieth century, and beyond. Gasparov's casual summary of the content of the entire opera may indeed provide the solution to the predicament posed by any attempt to identify Glinka's compositional style and consequently, on a macrocosmic level, the style adopted by Russian composers, both those contemporary with Glinka and his predecessors.

This was an opera whose heroine felt her equally at ease with the sounds of the Italian operatic coloratura and Russian domestic music making. Its musical world stretched from Finland to Persia, from the sultry terrain of the Thousand and One Nights to a Ukrainian village or Petersburgian suburb, from the unison stampede of 'pagan-Rus' to counterpoint of Bach, from the exotic passions of the Song of Songs to a ballroom vibrating with a waltz.²⁴⁶

An overriding multiplicity of styles, as outlined in this synopsis, does not imply a desertion of the Russian national consciousness: quite the reverse. The stylistic multiplicity seems here to suggest a propelling of the Russian compositional approach to greater heights of inspiration – those of the polystylistic composer. Gasparov offers several pertinent explanations of how this polystylism can be interpreted as a vision of Russian nationalism. Firstly, Glinka's inclusion of international factors symbolises the Russian attitude of embracing the entire world, different eras and cultures, achieving a union of East and West, the past and modernity. Reaching from Eastern Europe to the

²⁴⁶ Gasparov, *ibid.*, p. 32.

Far East, Russia has borders with fourteen countries as diverse as Norway, Ukraine, Mongolia, North Korea and China. These borders reflect the Russian idea of embracing the whole world. Glinka was ultimately attempting to raise his eminence to that of international repute by emblematically integrating both Western and Eastern influences.

In order to obtain international significance in the nineteenth century, Russia had been in need of an iconic national figure of genius to satisfy this vacuum and a certain compromise with – or at least inclusion of – Western standards was necessary in order to accomplish such impact (as – rightly or wrongly – these were the standards by which ‘genius’ was measured). It was eventually Pushkin who was thrust into such a position, a poet who could transcend any land or epoch through the universality of his work. (There are countless examples of Pushkin’s universality. For example: the Gypsies’ camp in *Bessarabia*, the harem in the Orient, European knighthood, medieval Madrid, ancient Rome, Russia’s contemporary rural and urban society, Russia’s historical and mythical past, to name a few).²⁴⁷

Glinka’s appropriation of Pushkin’s text is wholly significant, not least when the role of Russian symbolism is considered. Again, it is Gasparov who directs us to Pushkin’s 1828 introduction to his version ‘There is an oak-tree near the cove’, immediately plunging the world of *Ruslan and Lyudmilla* into a fairy tale fantasy. This fantasy world is reinforced by Pushkin’s placing of the castle – a magical paradise – in the north as well as Lyudmilla’s enchanted sleep. Blackamoor’s castle, with its sensual Oriental ambience analogous to folk fairy tale culture, has long been an ingrained Russian tradition. The Russian fairy tale fantasy is not limited to this example, but innumerable other examples can be found in Russian art music and culture, including Rimsky-Korsakov’s *The Golden Cockerel* and *Sadko*, and Stravinsky’s *Firebird* and *Petrushka*. All these works transpose Russian folktales to a Western ‘high art’ genre.²⁴⁸ In terms of *Ruslan and Lyudmilla*, these ideas, which lie behind both the opera and the text, provide audible overtones of sublime Russianness, which conceal the opera’s essence with subtle nuances of Russian

²⁴⁷ Gasparov, *ibid.*, pp. 32–33.

²⁴⁸ Gasparov, *ibid.*, p. 36.

consciousness. In addition, the dramaturgical performance representing the Oriental slave market incorporates people of all nations in national costumes.

The fantastical nature of the Russian fairy tale has been taken up in other areas of Russian folk life, including that of the Church. The mystical is an inherent part of Orthodox Christianity, manifest in its ritual, its liturgy, and its conception of miracles, icons and saints. Thus, Ustvolskaya's affinity with ritual, iconography and Orthodox practice thrusts her music into the realms of the mystical, the fantastic and the folk. Aspects of folk and liturgical ideas combined with the conventional features of the Western instrumental genres with which she was occupied, in turn suggest that Ustvolskaya's music can also be understood in terms of this Russian multiplicity. Ustvolskaya's music transcends the barriers naturally imposed by East and West by incorporating aspects of both, that – like Glinka and Pushkin – achieve a universality that can only be attained in Russian art, resulting in an all-embracing, humanitarian empathy.

There are many obvious examples of the employment of various dichotomies that characterise the Russian style: the tension between the operatic world stage and the Russian domestic scene epitomises Glinka's (and Pushkin's) effort to transport Russian art to the world platform; the obvious opposing forces of East and West; the use of archaic musical styles and the idea of modernity; the use of art music and folk music. The overall multiplicity of styles does not complicate the process of identifying the Russian style but rather *is* the Russian style. The diversity of Russian culture, Russian history, Russian folk music and the geography of Russia form the basic building blocks of what can be identified as the Russian musical language. The polystylism discussed above not only provides sincere musical communication but also prophesies a trend that was to be established as Russian composers in the subsequent centuries formed their own voice.

3.1.3: Tradition: The St Petersburg Myth

It is imperative to focus a little more on the city of St Petersburg, as its micro-culture was to have a colossal effect upon Ustvolskaya. St Petersburg has, infamously, experienced the most unfortunate of histories. From its original genesis, the fate of both the city and its inhabitants has been highly tragic: Andrei Bely (novelist, 1880–1934) described it as a ‘fragile Western civilisation precariously balanced on the top of the savage Eastern culture of the peasantry. Peter the Great – in the form of the Bronze Horseman – is recast as the Antichrist, the apocalyptic rider spiralling towards the end of time and dragging Russia into his vortex.’²⁴⁹ The unfortunate state of St Petersburg has given rise to such social commentaries as Gogol’s short stories, Dostoevsky’s novels (Chapter 2) and Akhmatova’s poetry. It is perhaps not surprising, when one considers the violence and tragedy that form the epicentre of Ustvolskaya’s work that her roots were firmly in the foundations of this great city. Although it changed its name three times during Ustvolskaya’s lifetime alone, she is inseparable from the city where she remained for her entire life amid the musical traditions of Musorgsky, Rimsky-Korsakov (and the ‘Mighty Five’), the young Stravinsky and other great cultural figures such as Bely, Joseph Brodsky (poet, 1940–1996) and Alexander Blok (poet, 1880–1921).

St Petersburg was built around three long, main roads, which were arranged in a radial fashion and which met at the Admiralty: Nevsky Prospekt, Gorokhovaya Street and Voznesensky Prospekt. Built by Swedish prisoners of war and Russian serfs in the image of the Western European cities that Peter had visited on his travels (most notably, Amsterdam), the building of St Petersburg was essentially to fulfill the Tsar’s lifelong ambition to modernise (or Westernise) Russia. The architectural result is what has been reported to be the most ‘Western’ of Russia’s cities. For such a large city, the geography is far from usual as there are long, straight roads with wide, open spaces, squares, canals and avenues. The city is, of course, on the coast, and now even includes some of the islands in the surrounding coastline. St Petersburg was built to

²⁴⁹ Orlando Figes, *Natasha’s Dance: A Cultural History of Russia* (London: Penguin, 2002), p. 421.

convey the idea of perfect proportion in everything and is dominated by horizontal lines. The result of this architectural dominance is a manufactured falseness. St Petersburg was not a city that evolved; rather it was placed, in all its ‘perfection’, on an unusual (and, some would say, unsuitable) spot.²⁵⁰ This is reflected in Ustvolskaya’s attitude towards her composition. Willing herself not to be a product of history, Ustvolskaya attempted to detach herself deliberately from any other influences and commanded herself not to be an organic product of the composing community. There are very few other cities in the world where Ustvolskaya could be so in accord with these principles, but St Petersburg is the place where – to Ustvolskaya – perfection could be established without organic growth.

In Chapter 2, Dostoevsky’s search for a spiritual awakening against the backdrop of St Petersburg was discussed, but he was not the first to express the tragedy of this city in literature. In his epic poem *The Bronze Horseman: A St Petersburg Tale*, Pushkin begins the St Petersburg preoccupation with ‘the little man’ and tells of his unfortunate demise. This saw the birth of the ‘St Petersburg Myth’, a term that denotes the cultural abstraction with the origin of St Petersburg and its role in Russia. Mythology and symbolism are subjects that have dominated commentary on St Petersburg. Even Hans Sikorski, Ustvolskaya’s publisher, has in its news archive an article that begins: ‘The “Ustvolskaya Myth” already began to grow during the composer’s lifetime’.²⁵¹

Even in Ustvolskaya’s lifetime, Leningrad was struck with humanitarian tragedy. The Leningrad Blockade (1941–1943) was one of the most costly sieges in history²⁵² and Ustvolskaya’s return to Leningrad would have had a profound impact on her personal welfare as well as on her compositions. All this had followed Stalin’s Great Purges of the 1930s, to which friends and professional colleagues of Ustvolskaya fell victim (see Chapter 6). Nalimova summarises the features of St Petersburg that were to inspire Ustvolskaya’s music as follows: 1) The original geometry of the city; 2) The extreme contrasts found in the city; 3) The city’s colour palette; 4) The mix of

²⁵⁰ Arthur George, Elena George, *St Petersburg: A History* (Stroud: The History Press, 2006).

²⁵¹ Unknown Author: ‘True, Eternal Bliss’ *Hans Sikorski*
<http://www.sikorski.de/3185/en/0%7B20%7D/a/0/true_eternal_bliss.html> (accessed on 29/06/2010).

²⁵² This, reportedly, resulted in up to 1,500,000 deaths, mostly from starvation.

architectural influences from the East and West; 5) The city's dualism.²⁵³ Although some of Nalimova's assertions are somewhat far-fetched (for example, that 'Ustvolskaya's compositions, despite the complexity of melodic texture, are clearly and distinctly structured; the texture is 'woven' from individual melodic lines, which, in the manner of St. Petersburg prospects, coexist whilst maintaining their individuality'²⁵⁴) she certainly has a point in some respects. When one also considers the extreme weather conditions of the city, and the drastic loss of light that occurs for half the year, alongside the tragic history of the city, it is not difficult to see why St Petersburg is traditionally a place of upheaval and distress. In response, the people of St Petersburg have adopted the Dostoevskyan idea of universal spirituality. This has had a huge impact on Ustvolskaya's musical aesthetic as well as her personal life. As Suslin claims in his preface to the Sikorski catalogue: '[Ustvolskaya's] specific idealism is informed by an almost fanatical determination, the typical Saint-Petersburgian one'.²⁵⁵

3.1.4: Tradition: Stravinsky and Objectivity: Straddling East and West

Stravinsky, straddling East and West, was a Russian composer who was geographically displaced to a different culture at the beginning of the political turmoil that saturated twentieth-century Europe. Detached from his Russian foundations yet, as a Russian, not fully accepted into Western European society (see Chapter 3.2.1), Stravinsky was impelled to discern a way through which he could alter the path of music to reflect his position in time and culture. To do this, he was forced to break away from the expressionistic legacy of the Romantic composers, and strike out in an alternative direction. Like Ustvolskaya, Stravinsky believed that the music of the Romantic composers was too committed to expressionistic, subjective development that mixed neither with any tendency towards traditionalism nor with modernist leanings.

²⁵³ Nalimova, *op. cit.*, pp. 129–130.

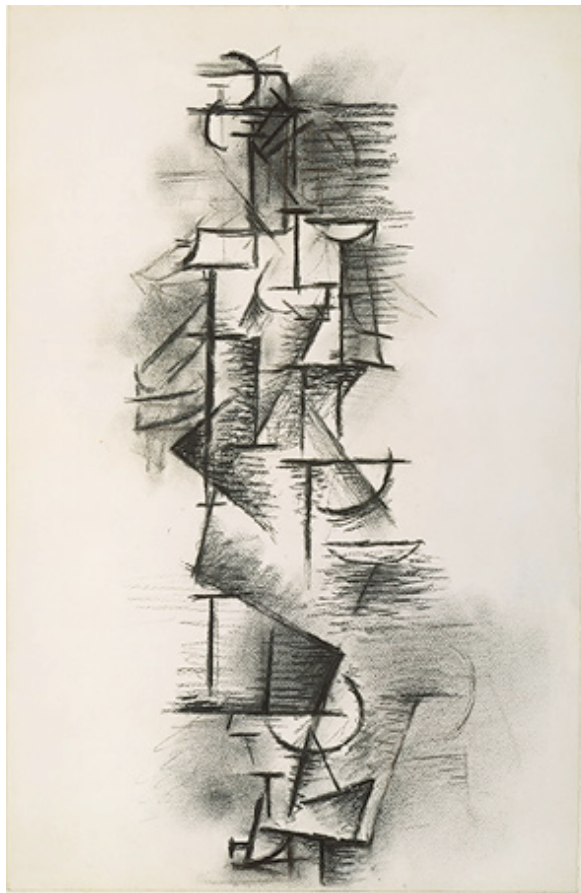
²⁵⁴ Nalimova, *ibid.*, p. 130.

²⁵⁵ Suslin, 'Preface', *op. cit.*.

The result was that both Stravinsky and Ustvolskaya attempted to disengage with the expressionistic and focused increasingly on the notion of a non-developmental, objective experience of their respective music.

Addressing this subject of objectivity in music, Jonathan Cross draws a parallel between Stravinsky's *Symphony of Wind Instruments* (1920) and *Standing Female Nude* (1910) (Illus. 3.1) by Pablo Picasso (1881–1973). *Standing Female Nude* was included in Picasso's first showing in the United States as part of an exhibition in Alfred Stieglitz's small gallery in 1911. The work caused considerable controversy and was labeled by critics 'the fire escape' due to the absence of three-dimensional form and linear construction. This controversy was enough for Stieglitz to purchase this work and use it as an example of the most modern art in his collection.²⁵⁶

Illus. 3.1: Pablo Picasso: Standing Female Nude, 1910



²⁵⁶ Unknown author, *The Metropolitan Museum of Art* <<http://www.metmuseum.org>> (accessed on 12/03/2010).

Cross argues that Stravinsky's musical blocks in this work equate to the basic visual elements of *Nude*:

The musical/rhythmic aspects of Cubism in general and *Nude* in particular, and the obvious objective, almost constructive aspect of the *Symphonies* immediately suggest a similar aesthetic...The basic element of *Nude*, the means by which the space is articulated, could not be more simple: straight lines and arcs, with rougher 'shading' to break up a little the geometric sharpness of the drawing. These elements intersect in such a way as to produce a pattern of repeating shapes – repetitions, though, which are never identical (more like a sequence of variations) – as well as alluding to a veiled human figure.²⁵⁷

This has huge relevance in terms of Ustvolskaya's musical aesthetic. Ustvolskaya's Composition No. 3, for example, articulates musical time through the repetition of small, repeated melodic motifs (or 'cells'), which intersect in such a way to produce a pattern of repeating shapes, not least in the rhythmic pulsation of the work. At the same time, Composition No. 3 alludes to its 'veiled figure', the spiritual subject of its subtitle: *Benedictus Qui Venit*. Cross continues his argument further still:

In the Stravinsky, a variety of musical blocks, individually characterised, are similarly produced [to *Nude*], the movement from one to the next forming the works' primary subject matter. In both works, there is no obvious transition from one plane/block to the next: in other words, they 'proceed' at an immediate level by means of opposition...Nonetheless, while not serving to undermine these fundamentally bold oppositions, there is, over a large scale, a degree of continuity which leads us through both works...: the interrupted vertical lines in the upper two thirds of Picasso's drawing or the arcs in the lower half, it seems to me, are instances of such 'interlock'.²⁵⁸

In the majority of Ustvolskaya's mature works, the music consists entirely of crotchet clusters throughout the chamber instrumentation, each crotchet beat varying only by the timbral effect of the instruments playing and the dynamic directions. There is, however, a degree of continuity throughout the work, as a sense of the linear is retained through the 'polyphony' of the short motifs, which are passed between the instruments (see Chapter 3.1.5). Nevertheless, these clustered dissonances form the basic characteristic of the work, and are

²⁵⁷ Jonathan Cross, *The Stravinsky Legacy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), p. 19.

²⁵⁸ Cross, *ibid.*.

individually characterised. This sense of purpose that permeates Ustvolskaya's music provides a sense of direction or continuity that parallels Picasso's (and Stravinsky's) work. Although Ustvolskaya's repetitive, objective blocks (clusters and repeated motifs) form the very basis of her mature style, there is a degree of continuity produced through the variation of these musical blocks.

Cross further discusses the parallel between Stravinsky's block form and Picasso's blocks in this work, surveying Stravinsky's 'blocks' as rather large sections of *Symphonies*. When considering this work in the context of Ustvolskaya, one can find similarities between Stravinsky's 'block form' and the Ustvolskayan approach, but Ustvolskaya's blocks are reduced in length to merely one crotchet beat at a time. With this in mind, there is also a rhythmic similarity between Ustvolskaya's music and *Standing Female Nude*. Picasso's rhythm is achieved through the bold lines, which interact with each other through their positioning against other lines, and the angles that are thus created. In the same way that Ustvolskaya created deliberate and repeated crotchet strikes, which vary according to her timbral choice (and according to the polyphonic interplay), Picasso adorns his deliberate lines with varied shading, mirroring Ustvolskaya's extreme changes in instrumentation and texture. The striking and extreme variation between Picasso's areas of light and dark (black and white) also reflects the extremities found in Ustvolskaya's music in terms of dynamic variation, instrumentation and timbral contrast.

Cross continues by observing what he terms an element of 'roughness' in this objective Cubism (in both *Nude* and *Symphonies*).²⁵⁹ This roughness is found once more in Ustvolskaya's extremes: the screeching of the piccolo in Composition No. 1, the breathy timbre of the low double bass ensemble in Composition No. 2, and the brutal quasi-fanfares in Symphony No. 3. However, this roughness is not limited to the instrumentation (and consequently timbral) qualities of these pieces: Cross's roughness can also be found in the irregularity of the musical form and unpredictability of the harmonic and melodic progression.

In the works of Picasso, Stravinsky and Ustvolskaya, there is a compelling interchange between the subject matter and the abstract fashion in

²⁵⁹ Cross, *ibid.*, pp. 20–21.

which it is represented. In Picasso's *Nude*, the subject matter does not obviously emerge when the painting is viewed, but the image becomes apparent little by little as the complex interaction of the lines slowly reveals itself. In just the same way, Ustvolskaya's complex and extreme musical language in *Composition No. 3* is, superficially, very distant from a traditional *Benedictus Qui Venit* but deeper consideration of this apparently abstract work places it firmly in the spiritual sphere.

Stravinsky wrote in his *Autobiography* that 'Music is...by its very nature, powerless to express anything at all'.²⁶⁰ To Stravinsky, musical objectivity could deliver a music object through musical expression but from a critical position, distant from the emotionalism and sentimentality of the late-Romantic period. The aggression of Ustvolskaya's music is far from sentimental and her break from tradition (added to her personal distaste for many forms of music of the past) is a reaction to the emotionalism and subjectivity that preceded her compositions, including the work of Shostakovich. Although it would perhaps seem on the surface that Ustvolskaya's music is indebted to her teacher's, in terms of the Russian school it is Stravinsky with whom the aesthetics of Ustvolskaya's music most resonate.

Yet there are limits in terms of identifying Ustvolskaya's music as purely objective. It is true that, in the same vein as Stravinsky's *Octet*, she closed off her music from the outside world, but Ustvolskaya did have a very subjective story to convey. Stravinsky said of his *Octet* that it was: 'Not an emotive work, but a musical composition based on objective elements which are sufficient in themselves'.²⁶¹ Ustvolskaya's sound world is as striking as Stravinsky's 'music about music'²⁶², but she is not quite so absorbed in the idea of separating the subject from the object. Although a far cry from the expressionistic late-Romantic orchestral works (and even the expressionism of the Second Viennese School), the subject is of paramount importance in Ustvolskaya's music. Yet there are still parallels if the notion of objectivity in music is deciphered differently: Cross sums up a further interpretation of Stravinsky's

²⁶⁰ Igor Stravinsky, *An Autobiography (1903–1934)* (London: Marion Boyars, 1990), pp. 91–92.

²⁶¹ Igor Stravinsky, Eric Walter White ed., 'Some Ideas About my Octuor', reprinted from *The Arts*, January 1924, *Stravinsky the Composer and his Works* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press), p. 575.

²⁶² Stravinsky, *ibid.*, pp. 574–577.

objectivity that does indeed resonate with Ustvolskaya's music: 'its playfulness, its sense of irony and critical distance from the musical materials, its eclecticism, its positive celebration of collective ritual'.²⁶³ As a result of this interpretation, it would seem that ascertaining a distance between one's subjects and composing materials does not necessarily equate to an indifference to the subject. This is the Ustvolskayan composing manner: the prominence of staunch commitment to the subject, but conveyed through an extreme musical language from which she could be entirely detached. The brutal repetition and ferocious strikes on the piano contain no conventional sentimental expression, yet reveal the subject matter with great intensity.

3.1.5: Tradition: The Heritage of Western Art Music

3.1.5.1: Ustvolskaya and Bach

It has been asserted that historically, Russian composers seized, and subsequently appropriated, western art music in order to assert their own musical identity. It thus follows that vestiges of western art music will be evident in the Russian style, despite the ways in which it has been altered. Ustvolskaya, however, was as silent as to which western composers were an influence upon her, as she was concerning Russian influences. According to Bagrenin, there were very few established composers with whom Ustvolskaya felt any sense of affinity, but the main composer she 'adored' was Bach, citing him as a 'special case'.²⁶⁴ Even though Ustvolskaya had a copy of a Beethoven manuscript on display in her apartment, she apparently did not like any of his works. According to Bagrenin, she liked (rather surprisingly) Rachmaninov's Piano Concerto No. 3. 'She listened to it very often, even in the 2000s, and particularly liked Arcady Volodos's performance: she even wrote him a letter of appreciation.'²⁶⁵ Other works she liked include Tchaikovsky's *Finale*:

²⁶³ Cross, op. cit., p.14.

²⁶⁴ Bagrenin, via e-mail, translated and received via Bakhmin, 20/06/2010.

²⁶⁵ Bagrenin, via e-mail, translated and received via Bakhmin, 20/06/2010.

Adagio Lamentoso from the Symphony No. 6 and, throughout her life, she was ‘taking off her hat’ to the genius of Schumann and Musorgsky.²⁶⁶

The starting point for observing any direct correlation between Ustvolskaya’s music and Bach’s must, for obvious reasons, be her piano works. Piano Sonata No. 3 ends with a lengthy chorale figure that takes up over 2’30” of the 17’ long work. Pensive, expressive and contemplative, it finishes with homophonic blocks of harmonic colour that, once more, by deriving material from Shostakovich’s renowned Twenty-Four Preludes and Fugues, create a double homage, both to Shostakovich and to Bach.

This influence was to be extended further still with the composition of Ustvolskaya’s own Preludes, which were completed in 1953, two years after Shostakovich’s. 1950 had seen the bicentenary of the death of J. S. Bach, which gave rise to huge celebrations and commemorations of the great composer’s work. Throughout her lifetime, Ustvolskaya felt a profound connection to the music of Bach and, despite usually insisting that her music should not be played in a concert with music from other composers, she seemed on one occasion truly delighted at the suggestion that her Preludes be alternated with Bach’s own Preludes in a public concert.²⁶⁷ It would therefore not seem too surprising that she chose to pay homage to Bach in her own fashion, in the same way that Shostakovich had.

Shostakovich explained his rationale for composing such a work following a performance of his own Twenty-Four Preludes and Fugues in May 1951 in the Small Hall of the Union of Composers:

When we listen to Bach’s music, it is impossible not to suspect that a whole series of his work, including the Forty-Eight Preludes and Fugues, were written as a way of keeping his polyphonic techniques polished. I too wanted a more serious task than just practising my technique.²⁶⁸

²⁶⁶ Bagrenin, via e-mail, translated and received via Bakhmin, 20/06/2010.

²⁶⁷ In conversation with Tishchenko, St Petersburg, 09/04/2008.

²⁶⁸ Dmitri Shostakovich, Alan Mercer ed., ‘50 Years Ago (1950–51)’ *Shostakovich Revisited*, DSCH Journal, No. 14, January 2001, p. 56. This is an excerpt from Shostakovich’s address at one of the two special assemblies in April and May 1951 of the Union of Composers.

Of course, Ustvolskaya seldom spoke about her compositional process and, true to character, she never expressed her reasons behind the composition of her Preludes. Yet from her teaching methods it is clear that she insisted upon her students' mastering established compositional techniques before embarking on their own: similar to many established composition teaching methods, she even used Bach as the basis of her teaching. That Ustvolskaya and Shostakovich were very close at the time of her Preludes is undeniable, and it is noteworthy that the manuscript of Shostakovich's score of Twenty-Four Preludes and Fugues was bestowed upon Ustvolskaya as a gift. This score was still in her possession when Shostakovich's biographer Sofiya Khentova examined it in 1977, but is now kept in the PSS. Having inspected this score, there is no evidence of a close relationship between the two composers at this time. However, had it been in Shostakovich's possession the score would have been unlikely to end up at the PSS. When Ustvolskaya sold her manuscripts to the PSS, she also rid herself of the manuscripts Shostakovich had given her. Yet Ustvolskaya did not merely replicate her former teacher's works: in the same way that Shostakovich had taken Bach's work and extended the musical vocabulary, Ustvolskaya broadened the musical language of Shostakovich's version as she explored her independent voice through her own preludes.

Where Bach ordered his Forty-Eight Preludes and Fugues according to their position in the chromatic scale (C major first, then C minor, C sharp major next, then C sharp minor, and so on), Shostakovich ordered his according to the circle of fifths. Ustvolskaya's Preludes, on the other hand, have no obvious harmonic connection, or any tangible harmonic root to any of them individually. To convey her connection to the canonic tradition, however, Ustvolskaya starts the work with childlike simplicity, on an exposed C-E-C motif in the right hand, which lingers on a pause on the final C before launching into her cycle. The first movement does, however, echo the 'simplicity' of C major as it is scored only for right hand, includes no key signature or rhythmic complexity, and retains a slow, steady tempo throughout.

The ferocity of Prelude No. 5 is as striking as it is brief (at 1'26, this prelude is the second shortest: only Prelude No. 12 is shorter).²⁶⁹ The final half

²⁶⁹ Due to the absence of bar lines, it is necessary to discuss this work in terms of minutes and

of No. 5 is reserved for a ten-note chorale passage at the end. The first 42'' are dominated by a repeated theme in octaves in the left hand (B \flat , A \flat , A $\flat\flat$, G $\flat\flat$, A $\flat\flat$, G \flat). Irregularity is constantly tangible: the first time this theme appears the G \flat is repeated at the end just once; the second time, it appears three times; third, six times; fourth, seven times; fifth, six times; and, finally, just four times. A syncopated repeated chord then takes its place as the dominating motif (E \flat -E $\flat\flat$ -F \flat), which dissolves into a repeated stream of accented crotchets, hinting for the first time at the minimalist pigeonhole into which Ustvolskaya would be thrust by the Western audiences in later musicological discourse. One look at the chorale figure that follows shows that this – both visually and aurally – is not too difficult a prospect to conceive: five pauses on five chords (with an additional note each time that leads into each pause). After the brutality by which it was preceded, this chorale is still and calm, as if the two sections came from different cycles rather than the same movement.

Ex. 3.2: The opening of the fifth movement of Ustvolskaya's 12 Preludes

The musical score shows the opening of the fifth movement. It is in 4/4 time with a tempo of quarter note = 264. The key signature has two flats (B-flat and E-flat). The bass line begins with a series of chords in octaves: B \flat , A \flat , A $\flat\flat$, G $\flat\flat$, A $\flat\flat$, G \flat . The treble line has a melodic line with various accidentals. The score includes dynamic markings like 'ff' and fingering numbers like '5' and '4'.

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seconds in order to convey exactly to which point the author is referring.

Ex. 3.3: The final 'chorale' passage of the fifth movement of Ustvol'skaya's 12 Preludes

The image shows a musical score for two staves. The top staff begins with a tempo marking of a quarter note equal to 72 (♩ = 72), followed by a 7-measure rest. The music then consists of a series of notes with various accidentals (flats and double flats) and slurs, marked with the instruction *p legato*. The bottom staff is marked 'G.P.' and begins with a 7-measure rest, followed by a series of notes with various accidentals and slurs, marked with the instruction *p*.

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Ustvol'skaya's Prelude No. 9 continues to explore the seamless stream of quavers found in Bach's counterpoint (and indeed her Prelude No. 8) by including a stream of quavers throughout the entire movement. Marked at a relatively fast tempo (crotchet = 224) and *fff*, the passage swaps to the right hand at almost exactly the mid-point of the piece. In contrast to Shostakovich's Preludes and Fugues, in which similar quaver runs are frequently found (see Prelude 16, for example), Ustvol'skaya furthers the piano's expressionistic capabilities by positioning variations of a staccato, awkwardly phrased motif in the accompaniment in the remaining hand.

The correlation between Ustvol'skaya's early works and Bach's polyphony is clearly visible: Trio and Grand Duet both exemplify the musical exchange between the performing instruments, all of equal importance. There is no sense of accompaniment and the rhythmic variation between the instrumental lines make it easy to discern each independent musical line. At first glance, the dissonance that saturates Ustvol'skaya's mature style may seem very distant from Bach's delicate polyphonic runs but, in actuality, Ustvol'skaya's music can be viewed as an advanced form of polyphony. Take, for example, Symphony No. 4: *Prayer* (1985–87). When performed, the introduction bars (1–18) gives the impression of homophony, with the leading voice in the trumpet. However, on closer examination it is clear that all the instrumental motives in this figure are of equal importance. Firstly, the trumpet is marked *piano*, when all the other less prevalent instrumental lines (less prevalent in terms of tessitura and timbre) are marked *forte* or *fortissimo*.

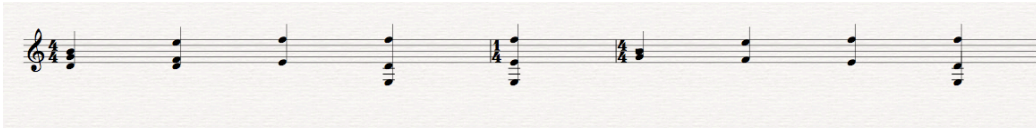
Secondly, an even more commanding line (the alto narrator) enters in bar 19, pushing all instrumental lines further into the background. Only at this point does the listener fully understand that the trumpet is not the leading voice but is only one of the participating lines in the textural backdrop. In addition, each of the instrumental lines is marked with the same articulation marks. Therefore, as each of the instrumental lines in the introduction is considered evenly matched, a polyphonic texture arises. Even as the voice enters in bar 19, it does so only as one part of the polyphonic texture (the natural dominance of the voice that would arise in a conventional song is here diminished as the low tessitura quietens its impact). The effect is that the polyphonic lines are difficult to distinguish as they (with similar rhythmic values) collide with each other vertically to achieve the kind of dissonance for which Ustvol'skaya is so famed. Susan Bradshaw discusses this issue:

With all its startling novelty, the visual delights of Ustvol'skaya's invertible counterpoint decrease aurally only in proportion to the instrumental inadequacies of timbre, register and sustaining power. Nevertheless, her early piano music is concerned with linear ideas of the purest, quasi-Bachian kind; but, unlike Bach's vocal-register keyboard fugues, her textures frequently explode towards the outer limits. This is music whose primarily horizontal disposition takes scant account of particular vertical coincidence or of the registral blend of thinly supported dissonance.²⁷⁰

So, as usual, Ustvol'skaya takes her initial inspiration and expands the musical vocabulary to new heights, expanding all the musical building blocks to their furthest limits. Furthermore, Ustvol'skaya uses each of the short motifs, which comprise each line of the texture, to create the entire work in the same way that Bach grows his entire polyphonic works from only one thematic motif. Therefore, instead of having a dissonant, homophonic chord progression in bar 22 (Ex. 3.4), there are five polyphonic lines of equal importance (Ex. 3.5).

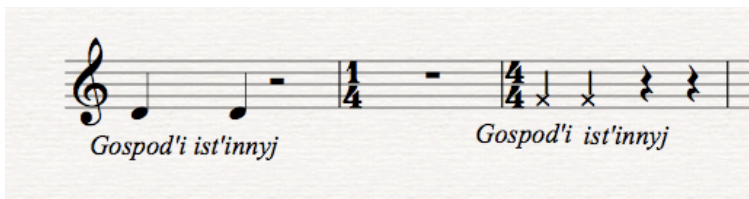
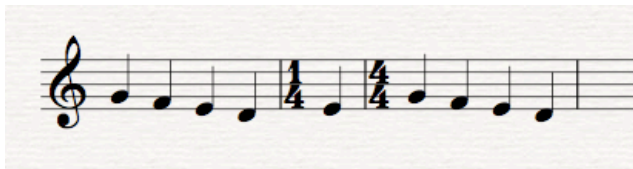
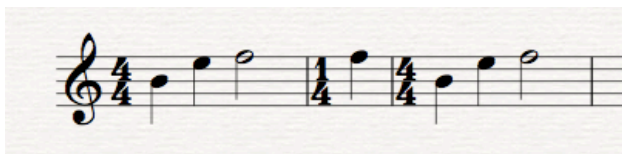
²⁷⁰ Susan Bradshaw, 'Galina Ustvol'skaya in Focus: St Peter's Friend', *The Musical Times*, Vol. 141 (Summer, 2000), p. 30.

Ex. 3.4: Symphony No. 4, bar 22: Instrumental lines



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Ex. 3.5: Symphony No. 4, bar 22: polyphonic lines



The control that Ustvolskaya imposed over her performers is also redolent of Bach, albeit this control is in each case relative to the composers' respective styles. Ustvolskaya's dogmatism over the score has already been noted but it is also necessary to bear in mind that Bach saw the figure of the composer as

authoritatively as Ustvol'skaya did.²⁷¹ Both composers used this authority to compose music that communicated the spiritual messages that occupied their respective personal belief systems.

3.1.5: Tradition: The Heritage of Western Art Music

3.1.5.2: Ustvol'skaya and Mahler

In addition to her love of Bach, it is also necessary to look later in the Germanic tradition for a further significant influence. Ustvol'skaya – just like her teacher Shostakovich – had a partiality for the works of Gustav Mahler (1860–1911), a condition she would refer to her students as ‘mahllaria’.²⁷² In particular, Ustvol'skaya held deep affection for *Das Lied von der Erde* (1908) (‘All of it. She had [heard] it performed by K. Ferrier’²⁷³) and from *Kindertotenlieder*; No. 3: *Wenn dein Mütterlein* and No. 4: *Oft denk’ ich, sie sind nur ausgegangen!* (1901–04) reportedly liking both the music and poetry of both of these cycles.²⁷⁴ It is easy to understand why Ustvol'skaya might be immediately attracted to these cathartic song cycles on account of their overriding sense of tragedy, and overall expressivity. Both *Das Lied von der Erde* and *Kindertotenlieder* are saturated by the idea of death, a subject expressed through innovative musical language. Bagrenin particularly points to Mahler’s manipulation of metre in these song cycles (in this example, moving from 4/4 to 3/2 to 2/2 metre in just four bars), a compositional technique that Ustvol'skaya employed throughout her career, even in her early works.

²⁷¹ David Rumsey, *The Symbols of the Bach Passacaglia*

<<http://www.davidrumsey.ch/Passacaglia.pdf>> (accessed on 11/08/2014).

²⁷² This is related by Bokman in his monograph (Bokman, op. cit., p. 49), yet Alexander Ivashkin claimed that, according to Rostropovich’s verbal recollections, this was not originally Ustvol'skaya’s joke but Prokofiev’s. In conversation with Ivashkin, London, 21/07/2010.

²⁷³ Bagrenin, via e-mail, translated and received via Bakhmin, 09/06/2010.

²⁷⁴ Bagrenin, via e-mail, translated and received via Bakhmin, 09/06/2010.

Ex. 3.6: *Kindertotenlieder*, Figure 3, *Oft denk' ich sie sind nur ausgegangen!* No. 4

The image shows a musical score for three instruments: Oboe, Clarinet in Bb, and Bassoon. The score is in 4/4 time, with a key signature of two flats (Bb and Eb). The tempo is marked 'a tempo'. The music is in a minor key. The Oboe part is mostly silent, with a few notes in the final measure. The Clarinet in Bb and Bassoon parts are the main focus, playing a melodic line with a dynamic marking of 'p' (piano). The score is divided into four measures, with a 3/2 time signature change in the second measure. The music is written in a single system with four staves.

The parallels between the composers' characters and approach to work are not, however, limited to this example. Further examination illuminates the hugely tangible overlap between the music of both composers. Born a Jewish German, Mahler converted to Catholicism in Hamburg in 1895. According to Holländer and Baker, Mahler's youthful years spent in Iglau:

...contained, in embryo everything that in later life crystallized into his broad cosmic philosophy, half pantheistic, half Christian ... Early in life this pantheistic trend received an importance impetus through the Christian doctrine of redemption.²⁷⁵

In a similar way to Ustvolskaya, Mahler attached himself to the ideas contained in the world of Dostoevsky and his cosmic world of suffering. According to his widow Alma Maria (1879–1964), Mahler, not unlike Ustvolskaya, 'takes for [his lifework's] subject the lonely human soul crying for redemption.'²⁷⁶ Like Ustvolskaya, Mahler was not without his own personal health struggles following a near-fatal haemorrhage in 1901, and diagnosis of a defective heart condition in 1907. An understanding of these personal dramas may go some way to explicate the genesis of the cycles in question. The death of his eldest

²⁷⁵ Hans Holländer and Theodore Baker, 'Gustav Mahler', *The Musical Quarterly*, Vol. 17, No. 4, October (1931), p. 451–452.

²⁷⁶ Holländer and Baker, *ibid.*, p. 452.

daughter and his diagnosis nurtured Mahler's interest in death and obsession with the idea of the cycle of life.²⁷⁷

In Mahler's youth, he was exposed to the Germanic folklore of his country, as well as songs from his Jewish cultural heritage. Ustvol'skaya specifically liked what she ambiguously referred to as the 'Jewish dancing intonations' of all of Mahler's songs – yet this was 'not the particular reason she liked them.'²⁷⁸ It is difficult to identify exactly what Ustvol'skaya meant by this comment, as there are no explicitly Jewish elements to this work but, interestingly, Kofi Agawu takes note of the folk elements of Songs No. 3 and 4²⁷⁹ the songs Ustvol'skaya, perhaps beyond coincidence in light of her own penchant for the inclusion of folk traditions, particularly singled out.

Mahler's symphonic song cycles would not have been welcome in Stalinist Russia: the official line was that Mahler's works were far removed from any ideal, proletarian music. In Peter Schmelz's landmark publication *Such Freedom, if Only Musical*, he relays a humorous anecdote by composer Nikolai Karetnikov (1930–1994) where he explained the brevity with which Mahler was 'studied' in the conservatory system in 1951:

As he entered the auditorium, the lecturer placed the score of Mahler's Fourth Symphony on the stand, opened it to the first page and spoke: 'Here comrades, we have the Austrian composer Mahler. He was born in 1860 and died in 1911. He was the main conductor of the opera in Prague, Hamburg and Vienna. In Vienna he was also the main conductor of the Philharmonic. He wrote ten symphonies and five symphonic vocal cycles. The composer was reactionary, bourgeois and static'...thus in 1951 we 'did' [proshli] Mahler.²⁸⁰

According to Bagrenin, in these early days of her career, Ustvol'skaya did have access to some of Mahler's rare scores through her teacher Shostakovich.²⁸¹ Indeed, there were some teachers at the conservatory who chose to expose their

²⁷⁷ Stephen E. Hefling, 'Das Lied von der Erde: Mahler's Symphony for Voices and Orchestra — or Piano', *The Journal of Musicology*, Vol. 10, No.3, (Summer, 1992), pp. 293–341. Edward F. Kravitt, 'Mahler's Dirges for His Death: February 24, 1901', *The Musical Quarterly*, Vol. 64, No. 3, July (1978), p. 347.

²⁷⁸ Bagrenin, via e-mail, translated and received via Bakhmin, 09/06/2010.

²⁷⁹ V. Kofi Agawu, 'The Musical Language of Kindertotenlieder No. 2', *The Journal of Musicology*, Vol. 2, No. 1, (Winter, 1983), p. 81.

²⁸⁰ Peter Schmelz, *Such Freedom, if Only Musical* (Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), p. 30.

²⁸¹ In conversation with Bagrenin, St Petersburg, 08/04/2008.

students to the music of Mahler (amongst others), despite the official line. In an interview with Schmelz, Karetnikov highlights the students' preference for certain teachers (such as Vissarion Shebalin 1902–1963) as they chose to show their students these scores: Slonimsky recalled his score teacher, Izrail Finkelshteyn, doing the same thing.²⁸² By the mid-1960s, Slonimsky and his classmates were meeting regularly for unofficial listening sessions as part of their self-education. The music they listened to included Mahler, Stravinsky, Hindemith, Arthur Honegger (1892–1955), Schoenberg, Anton Webern (1883–1945) and Alban Berg (1885–1935).²⁸³ According to Fairclough, Mahler was sympathetic to the Russian listener, and was even more popular in Russia than in other parts of Western Europe. Ivan Sollertinsky (1902–1944, director of the Leningrad Philharmonic 1937–1944), in particular, was responsible for popularising Mahler's music, and there was even a Bruckner and Mahler society, led by Sollertinsky, which met in the 1920s to play four-hand arrangements of his symphonies.²⁸⁴ So although officially Ustvolskaya would have had little formal education when it came to Mahler's music, there was some limited availability of recordings and scores amid composers' circles. It is of further note that in Schmelz's interview with Slonimsky, the latter specifically remembered studying Webern with Yakov Druskin who 'worshipped German music...under his direction we studied all of the serial rows [of Webern].'²⁸⁵ Yakov Druskin was the brother of Mikhail and Ustvolskaya's neighbour and mentor in the 1940s: this further conveys how Ustvolskaya's knowledge, and indeed love, of German music may have been cultivated from very early in her career. From the early 1950s, Soviet composers were more likely to access some of the previously forbidden scores of the Western avant-garde. This, after Stalin's death in 1953, was the very beginning of the thaw and these small glimpses of freedom were largely indebted to visits from important foreigners and relaxation of government policy.²⁸⁶ Although performances of Mahler's symphonies were a rarity even

²⁸² Schmelz, op. cit., pp. 33–34.

²⁸³ Schmelz, *ibid.*, p. 50.

²⁸⁴ Pauline Fairclough, Julian Horton ed., "'Symphonies of the Free Spirit': The Austro-German Symphony in Early Soviet Russia", *The Cambridge Companion to the Symphony* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), pp. 369–371.

²⁸⁵ Schmelz, op. cit., p. 51.

²⁸⁶ Schmelz, *ibid.*, p. 65.

after 1953, following the death of Stalin, Ivashkin remembered attending a performance of Mahler's 9th Symphony in the mid-1960s in St Petersburg. He also recalled gaining access to LPs of Mahler's 1st, 4th and 5th Symphonies in the late 1960s and 1970s, although had to wait over a decade later before recordings of Mahler's 6th, 7th and 8th Symphonies were to become available.²⁸⁷

According to Holländer and Baker, Mahler's philosophical leanings towards the mystical resulted in his 'never-ending struggle for the reconciliation of the tragically isolated individual ... with the universe, with all created beings in God',²⁸⁸ a sentiment that was sure to be attractive to someone of Ustvolskaya's philosophical outlook. In his song cycles, the voice set against an orchestral backdrop, Mahler succeeds in creating a synthesis of symphony and song. According to Alma Mahler, during the course of composing *Das Lied von der Erde* '[Mahler] found himself drawn more and more to his true musical form – the symphony.'²⁸⁹ In just the same spirit, Ustvolskaya treats her version of 'chamber music' in a symphonic manner. Take, for example, her Symphony No. 2: '*True and Eternal Bliss*' which, like *Das Lied von der Erde*, is scored for voice and instrumental accompaniment: Ustvolskaya cites this as her 'most important work', and greatest symphonic comment.²⁹⁰ Although the instrumental ensemble in this work is not a conventional romantic orchestra, it is described as an orchestra in the score and consists of the largest group of instruments of any of her personal works (six oboes, six flutes, six trumpets, trombone, tuba, percussion, canto and piano). The densely textured clusters of this work do not encourage a Mahlerian lyricism in any way; rather its impact is through the timbral abnormalities and sheer dynamic power, which could rival any conventional romantic orchestra. Both Mahler and Ustvolskaya implement a timbral use of instrumentation, but the most significant connection is the appearance of the voice in both of these 'symphonies', which results in a heightened sense of spirituality. Holländer and Baker describe this phenomenon: 'Similarly, the human voice appears among the other instruments as the interpreter of the highest ecstasy, the musical

²⁸⁷ In conversation with Ivashkin, London, 15/01/2011.

²⁸⁸ Holländer and Baker, op. cit., p. 452.

²⁸⁹ Alma Mahler, Donald Mitchell and Knud Martner ed., trans. Basil Creighton, *Gustav Mahler: Memories and Letters* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1975), p. 139.

²⁹⁰ Ustvolskaya, <www.ustvolskaya.org> (accessed on 21/05/2010).

symbol, as it were, of the *principum individuationis* in the cosmos.²⁹¹ *Das Lied von der Erde* and *Kindertotenlieder* both convey the inner world of an individual through the medium of two voices: the singer and the orchestra, the song and the symphony.²⁹²

Bagrenin specifically pointed out that it was not just the music and aesthetics of these two song cycles to which Ustvolskaya could have been attracted; she was also very taken with the selection of Rückert's poetry. The first poem (*Nun will die Sonne so hell*, Table 3.7) was written by Rückert after the death of his child and directly comments on the world that continues oblivious to his grief. Rückert's poetry could be superimposed upon Ustvolskaya's own horrific experiences, as much as it could Mahler's. Ustvolskaya, who also had experienced deep grief, was, like Rückert, felt she was expected to continue in an unconcerned world. The symbolism in Rückert's poetry includes a disparity of light and dark, the juxtaposition of sunrise and death, which goes beyond the literal subject matter of the poem: day itself brings tragedy instead of a resolution of the tragedy of the night.²⁹³

Mahler's setting of Rückert's symbolism is curiously inverted in terms of his musical imagery. Kravitt points out how Mahler sets the reference to sunrise *Nun will die Sonn' so hell aufgeh'n* [Now the sun will rise so brightly] as a descending vocal line (that is subsequently echoed in the orchestral part, Ex. 3.8). On the surface, this seems directly opposed to the subject it is supposed to reflect, yet it is surprisingly appropriate when one considers Mahler's world-view: The sunrise, although rising high in the sky, gives rise to the inevitable pain that the day brings. Ustvolskaya's pessimistic outlook is equally fatalistic: the new day does not give rise to fresh hope, it only brings with it the inexorable suffering of the night that has gone.²⁹⁴

Rückert was an Orientalist who was fascinated by Eastern philosophy and language, reportedly to the extent that he almost seemed to speak his native

²⁹¹ Holländer and Baker, op. cit., p. 462.

²⁹² It is worthy of note that Mahler also published, simultaneously, a slightly varied version of the music with piano, rather than orchestral, accompaniment. For a very detailed analysis of the differences between these two editions and the reasons behind this dual publication, see: Hefling, op. cit., pp. 293–341.

²⁹³ Kravitt, op. cit., p. 342.

²⁹⁴ There are further parallels between the three artists through their contrasting of day and night, light and dark, life and death and, symbolically, sin and redemption that are beyond the scope of this thesis but the subject of a paper the author hopes to publish in the near future.

language (German) as a foreign tongue. This inclination to look Eastwards would have been hugely attractive to Ustvolskaya. (Indeed, Ustvolskaya spoke fluent German, so could enjoy Rückert's poetry in its native tongue.²⁹⁵) As early as 1877, Rückert had implemented unusual syntax and diction for expressive advantages in the same way that both Mahler and Ustvolskaya (in their respective epochs and cultures) manipulated musical syntax for evocative purposes to communicate the desperation of their pessimistic outlook. This journey of personal experience to cosmic suffering, or personal suffering as suffering of all human beings, is also the case in Ustvolskaya's symphonies. In both Ustvolskaya's and Mahler's 'symphonies' the music is seen as a vehicle for universal spiritual purification. The symbolic, spiritual dimension of Mahler's *Kindertotenlieder* is thus observed:

This style, novel and daring alike, alluring and forbidding through the heterogeneity of its elements of expression, left no auditor indifferent, but obliged each to assume instinctively an attitude either for or against; an effect which flows from the essential prerequisites of Mahler's art. The extreme of subjective self-expression, it none the less rises to an impersonal, world-embracing height. In Mahler's symphonic development, personal experience is transmuted into cosmic symbolism, personal suffering becomes a part of the suffering of all created beings and the angels of heaven participate in the blissful joys of the individual. The individual as a microcosm, a reflection of the universe, participates in its agitations and tragedies, in its chaos, in its purifications and sublimities.²⁹⁶

Mahler's tragic writing was also to have had a strong affect upon Shostakovich's own symphonic writing. This is worthy of note, not least because Ustvolskaya would have been exposed further to Mahler's influence through her deep knowledge of Shostakovich's music.

²⁹⁵ In conversation with Bagrenin, St Petersburg, 08/04/2008, and further evidenced through Ustvolskaya's correspondence written in German held in the PSS.

²⁹⁶ Holländer and Baker, op. cit., p. 462.

Table 3.7: Nun will die Sonne so hell, from Rückert's Kindertotenlieder

Nun will die Sonne so hell aufgehn, Als sei kein Unglück die Nacht geschehn. Das Unglück geschah auch mir allein, Dies Sonne, sie scheint allgemein.	Now the sun will rise so brightly, As is the night had brought no grief. The grief was mine alone, The sun shines for everyone.
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Du musst die Nacht nicht in dir verschrenken, Musst sie ins ewige Licht versenken! Ein Lämpchen erlosch in meinem Zelt, Heil sei dem Freudenlicht der Welt!	You must not merge the night within you, But submerge it in eternal light! A little lamp went out in my tent, Hail to the joyful light of the world! ²⁹⁷
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Ex. 3.8: Nun will die Sonn', bars 5–10, Song No. 1 from Mahler's Kindertotenlieder

The musical score for 'Nun will die Sonne so hell' is presented in two systems. The first system covers bars 5-7, and the second system covers bars 8-10. The vocal line is in a soprano register, and the piano accompaniment is in a simple harmonic style. The dynamics range from piano (p) to pianissimo (pp). The lyrics are written below the vocal line.

²⁹⁷ Friedrich Rückert, *Kindertotenlieder* (Frankfurt am Main: J. D. Sauerländer, 1872), p. 369.

Agawu addresses other factors that shape Mahler's symphonic process that have further resonance in terms of Ustvolskaya's music, drawing particular attention to his manipulation of short melodic cells to create the melodic substance of the entire song. Of course, the manipulation of short melodic cells is a characteristic feature of Ustvolskaya's music but, as she was silent on the subject during her lifetime, Agawu uses Mahler's words on the process to shed light on the reasons behind it:

Our model in this matter is in nature. Just as the whole universe has developed from the original cell – through plants, animals, men, to God, the highest being – in music, too, a whole piece should be developed from a single motif, a single theme, which contains the germ of all that is to follow...Variation is the most important element of musical work.²⁹⁸

So, we can deduce through the Mahlerian connection that Ustvolskaya's repetition and manipulation of short melodic cells has spiritual resonance, as it symbolically conveys the organic nature of the universe.

A further way in which Ustvolskaya spiritually elevates her art is through its reliance on text. As previously addressed in Chapter 2, and as will be further addressed in Chapter 5, the text of Ustvolskaya's music is of paramount importance as it directs the shape of horizontal polyphonic lines throughout many of her early works and *all* her works written in her mature style, with no exceptions. Even when there is no text in an instrumental line, the melodic contours of her mature work (and, indeed, there are examples in her early works) follow the shape of ancient Orthodox chant. The chant itself is wholly dependent upon the shape and structure of the liturgical text.²⁹⁹ In Mahler's symphonic songs, the text is also of paramount importance and, as a result, the melody is text-derived. Agawu draws our attention to clear remarks made by Mahler himself to Natalie Bauer-Lechner that verifies this assertion:

²⁹⁸ Agawu, op. cit., p. 86.

²⁹⁹ This observation will be subject to further investigation in Chapter 5.

Have you noticed that, with me, the melody always grows out of the words? The words, so to speak, generate the melody – never vice versa. It is the same with Beethoven and Wagner. And this is the only way to achieve an indissoluble unity of words and tone.³⁰⁰

Mahler completed his melancholic *Kindertotenlieder* during one of the happiest phases of his life, conveying what Kravitt claims is his ‘inverse artistic expression [when] perhaps he realized and feared how much he had to lose’.³⁰¹ Yet if we use Ustvolskaya as a model we can see that, despite the ups and downs of ordinary life, she was constantly mindful of the tragedy that saturates human life. To both Ustvolskaya and to Mahler, to live was to suffer, to suffer is to be human and that is why we have the *Kindertotenlieder*.

3.2: Revolution

3.2.1: Revolution: Eurasianism, Stravinsky and Ustvolskaya

Taruskin’s consideration of the ‘Eurasian’ with regard to the work of Stravinsky incorporates consideration of both the aforementioned Eastern, Western and Russian aspects of music and serves to locate Stravinsky’s music within these terms. Indeed, this notion of Eurasianism does not only resonate with Ustvolskaya’s music, but also the generic position of Russian composers in terms of the international music scene throughout the twentieth century. In order wholly to comprehend the parallels between Ustvolskaya’s ideological position and the Eurasian movement, it is necessary to consider the commitment to this movement by Stravinsky to form a coherent parallel.

Stravinsky began his involvement in the Eurasian movement through his friend Pierre Souvtchinsky (1892–1985).³⁰² Souvtchinsky had lived in Sofia,

³⁰⁰ Agawu, op. cit., p. 82.

³⁰¹ Kravitt, op. cit., p. 353.

³⁰² Other Russian émigrés of the group include: Lev Karsavin (philosopher, historian: 1882–1952), Prince Nikolai Trubetskoy (linguist, historian: 1890–1938) and Georges Florovsky (priest, theologian, historian: 1893–1979).

Bulgaria in 1920 along with many other Russian émigrés who had left Russia through Turkey, and founded a Russo-Bulgarian publishing company³⁰³ whose first release was Prince Nikolai Trubetskoy's aggressively anti-Western article 'Europe and Humanity'. The following year, Souvtchinsky released a second volume, *Exodus to the East*, where he himself featured as a co-author. Documentation of the relationship between Souvtchinsky and Stravinsky goes back to 1922 – the time when Souvtchinsky's involvement in the movement was at its height – when Stravinsky was living in Berlin, waiting for his mother to join him from Russia.³⁰⁴ The Eurasian movement was largely occupied with placing 'Russianness' in an international context, whilst embracing the idea that Russians were neither Europeans nor Asiatics. Many composers, who had left Russia and were living in the diaspora in Western Europe, were searching for some theoretical underpinning to their art in order to establish an identity for Russian art without embracing Western Modernism. After all, Russian culture, in contrast to the basis of the consistent European cultural model, had its roots in an Eastern mysticism that inevitably propelled Russian artists in a spiritual direction.³⁰⁵

The crisis that followed the First World War threw Europe into political, social and economic disrepute. The Eurasian movement saw the war as the ultimate climax of a process of increasing materialism that had attacked Europe throughout the nineteenth century in the forms of industrialisation, the race for armament, imperialist and colonial jealousies and, ultimately, a 'victory of material over the spirit.'³⁰⁶ To the Eurasians, the war was living proof that Western ideals had failed: it thus became the Eurasianists' preoccupation to seek an alternative. In addition, there was a prevailing view amongst the Eurasianists that Russia was a non-European country, and that Communism was essentially a Western doctrine. To the Eurasians, therefore, the political situation in Russia failed to provide an alternative to Western methods. The Eurasian movement thus saw its role as achieving a sound ideology to counter

³⁰³ *Rossiyo-bolgarskoye knigoyzdatelstvo*.

³⁰⁴ Richard Taruskin, *Stravinsky and the Russian Traditions: A Biography of the Works Through 'Mavra'*, Vol. 2 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), p. 1126.

³⁰⁵ Alexander Ivashkin, *Symbols, Metaphors and Irrationalities*, paper delivered at Mimesis, Verita, Fiction: International Symposium, Santa Croce University, Rome, 03/04/2007.

³⁰⁶ P. Malevsky-Malevich, *A New Party in Russia* (London: G. Routledge and Sons, 1928), p. 13.

both Western Capitalism *and* Soviet Communism. As a result, the governing principle of Eurasianism was the supremacy of religious culture, as it was claimed that religion was the only source of spirit that could pervade social relations.³⁰⁷

Following the Westernisation of Russia by Peter the Great, there had long been a misperception of identity amongst the Russian people (more specifically, those living in St Peterburg), resulting in Russia's involvement in Europe's bickering in the early years of the twentieth century, and culminating in the tragedy of the First World War. In post-war Europe, religion was largely on the decline, and secularism and materialism were becoming widespread: these were values that did not easily accommodate the governing Eurasian principles, where religion was still an important constituent of Russian mentality and society. Increasing numbers of the Russian intelligentsia were forced into exile, into a Europe that they despised, without a hope of returning to their native country that no longer even existed as the Russia they had known.³⁰⁸ Europe's errors, which had led to the First World War, testified to the religious, political and moral organisational flaws that Eurasianists believed could be saved by Russia.³⁰⁹ An international uprising of nationalism also highlighted the relevance of these wartime realities, and this widespread evocation of patriotic feeling was coupled with rudimentary anti-Germanism. This, combined with the profound emotion induced by such a worldwide catastrophe, became fertile soil for the Eurasian movement in the arts. Trubetskoy argued that one could not be anti-German without being entirely anti-Western.³¹⁰ Some Eurasian writers took the concept further by terming the Eurasian phenomenon 'Turanian', although the interpretation of this term is no less ambiguous than the former, referring to the Persian name for the extensive landmass on the north boundary beyond the Oxus River.³¹¹ The term 'Eurasia'

³⁰⁷ P. Malevsky-Malevich, *ibid.*

³⁰⁸ Lesley Chamberlain, *The Philosophy Steamer: Lenin and the Exile of the Intelligentsia* (London: Atlantic Books, 2007).

³⁰⁹ Taruskin, *Stravinsky and the Russian Traditions: A Biography of the Works Through 'Mavra'*, *op. cit.*, pp. 1127–1128.

³¹⁰ Romain Rolland, *Journal des années de guerre, 1914–1919* (Paris: Éditions Albin Michel, 1952), p. 61.

³¹¹ The present-day name of the Oxus River is the *Amu Darya*, beginning in the Pamir Mountains and running west along the border of Afghanistan until reaching the southern tip of the Aral Sea.

is clearly a synthesis of the words 'Europe' and 'Asia': the Russian the word is *Evrasya*. However, in English the word 'Eurasian' already had a different meaning and this is perhaps why other words such as 'Europasia' and 'Turanian' have been implemented to mean the very same thing.³¹²

The Eurasianists developed the ideas of the nineteenth-century philosopher and culturalist Vladimir Stasov (1824–1906), who had argued that the majority of Russian folk culture had emerged from the East, and thus was deeply rooted in a tradition that was very distant from the European model. Thus, to Stasov, the East was profoundly embedded in the Russian psyche, differentiating the foundation of Russian culture from any product from the West. Stasov instigated a partiality for a Russian Orientalism in music, influencing distinguished composers such as Musorgsky. As a result, Trubetskoy, as an active member of the twentieth-century Eurasian movement, analysed how this 'Eastern psyche' acted upon the Russian character. His findings are extremely interesting, both in terms of the Eurasian movement and, in particular, Ustvolskaya's music, as the parallels are clearly tangible: fatalistic attitudes, the tendency to languorous contemplation, an attraction to the ideas of universality and abstract symmetry, and an emphasis on religious ritual. According to Trubetskoy, Russian Orthodoxy embodied this idea of Russianness owing to its dependence on ritual and the interaction between this ritual, life, and art.

Stravinsky (who, of course, could be considered the foremost Russian artist living in the diaspora) did indeed inspire the Eurasianists. Regardless of the point at which his involvement in the movement became intentional, the Eurasian movement affected both his musical creativity and his personal outlook. It was his wartime attitude that largely embodied a sudden shift in his personal and compositional approach (notably when he was living in Switzerland). A conversation recorded by Romain Rolland in 1914, conveys Stravinsky's sincerity surrounding this subject:

³¹² This term could convey the same sentiments behind Eurasianism, without actually referring to either Europe or Asia in accordance with the concepts behind the movement and achieving a sense of disconnection from the two. Taruskin uses the term 'Turanian' exclusively to refer to the 'land of Stravinsky's musical imagining' (Taruskin, *Stravinsky and the Russian Traditions: A Biography of the Works Through 'Mavra'*, op. cit., p. 1128): this is a further reason as to why the author prefers to employ the term 'Eurasia', so as to adhere to the generic application of the term.

He claims for Russia the role of splendid, healthy barbarism, heavy with gems that will inseminate the thinking of the world. He is counting on a revolution to topple the dynasty and found a Slavic United States. Moreover, he attributes the cruelties of the Tsarist system in part to the German elements that have been incorporated into Russia and run the main wheel of the government or the administration. The attitude of German intellectuals inspires him with boundless contempt. Hauptmann and Strauss, he says, have the souls of lackeys. He touts the old Russian civilisation, unknown in the West, the artistic and literary monuments of northern and eastern cities.³¹³

This recollection proved not to exist as an example of mere posturing but soon began to manifest itself in terms of Stravinsky's compositional approach. In the same way that Russian society could not adapt itself to Western European form, Russian *musical* form was equally as difficult to modify. Sure enough, in the Swiss period, between *The Nightingale* (1914) and *Pulcinella* (1919), Stravinsky wrote no new orchestral music and very little for conventional Western groups.³¹⁴ Despite the prevalence of nationalistic composers in nineteenth-century Russia, no Eurasian composer had completely rejected Western genres as it would have defied their concept of true art. Stravinsky's denunciation of traditional Western genres plainly related to the 'Europeanisation' of Russian (or Eurasian) musical values. This point is reinforced by an examination of Stravinsky's musical repertoire prior to these years: until 1914, Stravinsky favoured radical content over revolutionary form and often included this radical content *contained* by conventional genre. In 1919, Stravinsky described his work *Svadebka* (1917) as a *divertissement* and specified that it was *not* a ballet.³¹⁵ Scriabin's decision to leave Russia for the performance of his 'Mysterium' also has significant relevance as the Eurasian movement is considered, as it was always his absolute intention to execute this.³¹⁶

³¹³ Rolland, op. cit., p. 59.

³¹⁴ This is with the exception of a few minor works e.g. Three Pieces for String Quartets. It must be noted that this period corresponded with The Great War, which undoubtedly would have had a profound, practical bearing on what was possible, compositionally. There was little money for artistic endeavours, and many were caught up in the war effort: Stravinsky could only write for the players who were around.

³¹⁵ Letters of April 6th and July 23rd 1919. Vera Stravinsky and Robert Craft, *Stravinsky in Pictures and Documents* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1978), p. 154.

³¹⁶ When forced to accept descriptive terms from outside of your own tradition, it is, naturally, far easier to say what it is not, rather than what it is. Taruskin, *Stravinsky and the Russian Traditions: A Biography of the Works Through 'Mavra'*, op. cit., pp. 1129–1130.

Although the essence of the Eurasian movement sprang from a group of Russians in the diaspora – an assemblage of uprooted Russian intellectuals who attempted to reconstruct an already evaporated Russia in order to transform their rootless and disjointed survival in a foreign society – these motives can be superimposed upon a different context. Even though Soviet composers who had remained in Russia were not forced to live a fragmented existence in a foreign society, their endurance of a regime that controlled their entire productivity – and the isolation this caused – resulted in a situation that resonates fully with the motives behind the early twentieth-century’s Eurasian movement. With this in mind, it would be entirely possible to consider the motives behind the Eurasian movement as a potential inspiration behind many twentieth-century compositions in the Soviet Union, with Ustvolskaya’s compositional activity being no exception. There were philosophers who were still living in the Soviet Union (such as Florensky and Losev) who carried the socio-political notions of Eurasianism into Soviet intellectual circles: this task was difficult, to say the least, as both figures spent years in Stalin’s camps as a result, and were not published.

If the briefly mentioned compositional approaches undertaken by Stravinsky are considered in respect to Ustvolskaya, a striking parallel is found. Ustvolskaya dispensed with any sense of traditional genre that prevailed in the work of many Russian composers before her, including Shostakovich. In fact, Ustvolskaya occasionally secedes from *any* pre-existing framework for her works by discarding any form of conventional titles. This can be seen most clearly in the titles Compositions Nos. 1, 2 and 3. Even where her compositions are labelled conventionally (her symphonies, for example) there is little evidence of the retention of traditional values of Western examples.³¹⁷ This reactive attitude towards the Western musical genre of the symphony correlates broadly with Stravinsky’s Eurasian dissatisfaction with any European model. A further resonance with Stravinsky is Ustvolskaya’s implementation of unconventional combinations of instruments. By breaking away from the established ‘norm’, dictated by Western values, Ustvolskaya – like Stravinsky

³¹⁷ For further thoughts on the breadth of Russian *symphonism*, see Boris Asafiev, David Haas ed. and trans., *Symphonic Etudes: Portraits of Russian Operas and Ballets* (Lanham, Maryland, Toronto, Plymouth, UK: The Scarecrow Press, Inc., 2008).

– could reinvent music itself in a different context – a *Russian* context. Ustvolskaya was not merely ‘breaking the rules’ but establishing a different set of rules whereby Russian composers were no longer considered marginal to western art music, but could create an authentic genre in its own right.

Ustvolskaya may not have used these Eurasian ideas deliberately to bring an element of Russianness into her music (after all, she was not openly a member of the Eurasian movement), but the same building blocks are evident in her work. Ustvolskaya used this Eurasian musical language to differentiate her music from the Western European model and as a tool to progress musically in the Russian tradition, away from the cultural norms of the European model. Ustvolskaya’s implementation of iconicity and ritual (Chapter 2) and *znamenny raspev* (Chapter 5) adheres to Stasov’s ideas that Russian Orthodoxy is the epitome of the Russian, Eastern psyche. This also parallels Stravinsky’s use of ritual in his early ‘Russian’ works (*The Rite of Spring* (1913), *The Firebird* (1910), *Svadebka* etc.) and later his penchant for harmonising Russian church chant in his later liturgical music. Ustvolskaya’s fatalistic attitude has a further resonance with Prince Trubetskoy’s Eurasian writings.

In both instances, Stravinsky and Ustvolskaya were detached from an ancient Russia as a result of geopolitical isolation. In both instances, Stravinsky and Ustvolskaya sought concord in a Russia that no longer existed by including musical material – exclusive to Russia’s heritage – that could retrieve a direction for Russian art. In both instances, Stravinsky and Ustvolskaya could not find any answer in the West or the West’s traditions and, consequently, instead of continuing to mould their Russian music into the shapes imposed by the German tradition, both composers returned to the Eurasian idea of the purity of their own Russian inheritance to uncover a solution.

Taruskin observes Stravinsky’s concept of diatonic modality, seized from folk *napevy*, where the tonal centres are not pre-established by the mode but determined dependent on context. Musicologists use the term ‘*napevy-formuly*’ or ‘formulaic melodies’ to ‘denote a melody that may be sung to a group of verbal texts particularly in the agricultural cycle and the wedding

ceremony.³¹⁸ Stravinsky does not provide a tonal centre, something that is reinforced by his dissonant harmonisations and impulsive final cadences.³¹⁹ The use of acciaccatura features conspicuously in many of Stravinsky's songs of this time, adding to the overriding ambiguity of his harmonization. For example, a G# pedal in the fourth song of the *Pribaoutky* (1914) provides constant tension against the recurrent F in the bassoon, which equates to the most obvious acciaccaturas frequenting the second and last songs. Taruskin points out the saturation of these songs with acciaccaturas, elucidating the double acciaccatura in the melody of *Natashka* (*Pribaoutky* No. 2): the D and E surrounding the initial E♭. The outcome of these repeatedly occurring acciaccaturas is an intensified sense of monophony or heterophony over conventional harmonisation. A further patent example is the coda of *Kornilo* (*Pribaoutky* No. 1), which is completely dominated by acciaccaturas as the oboe encircles the notes of the clarinet's D♭/G tremolo. The combination of notes as a result of this fabricates the intervals of the whole tone scale: C D E♭ F G♭ A♭ A B. The prominence of heterophony is a distinctive hallmark in these songs, redolent of the *podgolosky*.³²⁰ It is the second song of Stravinsky's *Kolybelnye Kota* that perhaps demonstrates best the harmonic deficit in favour of a heterophonic pairing between the voice and first clarinet. Through Taruskin's identification of further acciaccatura, coupled with the evasion of triad he, somewhat anachronistically, applies the as yet un-invented term, 'clusters'.

Dissonant harmonisation, modal harmonies and belligerent clusters are all attributes of Ustvol'skaya's mature style. Take, for example, section 7 of Piano Sonata No. 5 (Ex. 3.9) where a scalar passage is introduced in the right hand: the melody meanders chromatically around the mid-range of the piano in stepwise movement. The left hand enters with a repeated three-note motif – D, E and F – which forms the opening of the ascending octatonic scale. The right

³¹⁸ James Bailey, *Three Russian Lyric Folk Song Metres* (Bloomington: Slavica, 1993), p. 264.

³¹⁹ For a comprehensive analysis of the songs composed during Stravinsky's 'Swiss' period, see Taruskin, *Stravinsky and the Russian Traditions: A Biography of the Works Through 'Mavra'*, op. cit., p. 1162–1182. Taruskin also offers a broad analysis of the folk texts used in these songs, although, as Ustvol'skaya did not employ folk texts in her work it is of limited relevance here. However, his discussion of the Eurasian phenomenon in terms of Stravinsky's compositional approach is essential for a complete understanding of the topic.

³²⁰ Russian polyphonic folk music from the mid-seventeenth century.

hand melody drops out, leaving an isolated left hand melodic line to continue its octatonic ascent (beat 71 after 7) and continues into the right hand until it lands on an E. Following a four-note interlude, the octatonic scale continues its voyage starting on a D \sharp to B \flat . After a quaver rest, the melody drops down a minor third and resumes its octatonic journey to the E($\flat\flat$), the final peak of the ascent. Throughout this work, there is no firm tonal centre: any sense of a tonal centre during the course of the piece is only achieved within the context of the musical motif, even at cadences that are often left unresolved. Although there is a definite sense of polyphony between the various motifs in the works, the collisions of these musical lines result in Ustvolskaya's idiosyncratic clusters, which dominate many of her later works and further the sense of unresolved dissonance and absence of tonal hierarchy or sense of key.

Ex. 3.9: Piano Sonata No. 5, beat 71 after figure 7

Octatonicism

The image displays a musical score for Piano Sonata No. 5, beat 71 after figure 7. The score is presented in two systems. The first system features a treble clef staff with a melodic line starting on a D \sharp and moving through an octatonic scale, and a bass clef staff with a rhythmic accompaniment. The second system shows a similar structure. Dynamics include *pp*, *p*, and *p espress*. There are also markings for 'Figure 7' and 'Octatonicism' with brackets. The score includes various musical notations such as notes, rests, and dynamic markings.

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Ex. 3.10: Piano Sonata No. 5, ending of Movement 1: clusters and unresolved cadence



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In both Ustvolskaya's and Stravinsky's cases, it is not necessarily the authenticity of Russian archaism, but the forceful rejection of Europe that remains their most prominent attribute in terms of Eurasianism. It is not the author's intention to label Ustvolskaya a member of the Eurasianist movement, but merely to point out the parallels between her approach and the trends in the Eurasian movement, as well as the similar motivations behind the compositional techniques used. This could well have been imparted through Stravinsky's music, as Ustvolskaya was familiar with it throughout her career.³²¹ Ustvolskaya was revolutionising the musical language that she had been taught in order to dispense with traditional Western compositional techniques. Soviet life was difficult, there was no answer to it in Western secularism for Ustvolskaya. Only one approach remained: to return to the idiosyncrasies that characterised Russia before the advent of socio-political and cultural disruption. That necessitated a return to the features deeply rooted in her people's psyche – ritualism, mysticism, spirituality, fatalism, quiet contemplation: a sense of returning to uniquely Russian qualities, a technique elevated by the Eurasianists and thus employed by Ustvolskaya.

³²¹ Bagrenin, via e-mail, translated and received via Bakhmin, 09/06/2010.

3.2.2: Revolution: The Soviet Avant-Garde

The beginning of the twentieth century saw a re-evaluation of all romantic, expressive elements of music, which resulted in modernist experimentation throughout the world. The era of Claud Debussy's *L'après-midi d'un faune* (1894), Schoenberg's introduction of the twelve-tone system (1921), Richard Strauss' *Elektra* (1909) and Stravinsky's *The Rite of Spring* saw the rise of a modernism that conveyed each respective composer's reaction to realism. With these modernistic innovations saturating Western Europe, it follows that music in Russia would progress in a similar fashion. Sure enough, the 1910s saw the genesis of Scriabin's *Mysterium*, which dispensed with traditional form through a modernist embracing of ritualism and mysticism. At the same time, Sergei Prokofiev (1891–1953) completed his opera *The Gambler* (1917), based on Dostoevsky's story of the same name. The modernist trend reached Russia and, amid the revolutionary ideas that were swallowing Russian society, Russian artists – in every discipline – were questioning exactly in what direction their art was going. When considering the idea that Ustvolskaya was not just composing in the realms of tradition but was an active force in the progression of new music from the end of the 1930s, it is necessary to consider the progressive surroundings of her music, starting with the circle of the avant-garde whose music formed the cultural, artistic and social backdrop of her life and music. As Kandinsky put it:

Every work of art is a child of its age and, in many cases, the mother of our emotions. It follows that each period of culture produces an art of its own that can never be repeated.³²²

In other words, there is an inevitable connection between art that is produced in the midst of the same culture and period; it is therefore reasonable to consider the broad panorama of Soviet music that was being produced in the same era and period as Ustvolskaya's work.

³²² Wassily Kandinsky, *Concerning the Spiritual in Art* (Kessinger Publishing, 2004), p. 11.

In discussing the Russian avant-garde, Ivashkin observes some very notable results as a direct consequence of the conflict between the *subjective*, symbolic content (which defines the very direction of Russian music) and the *objective* emergence of the avant-garde³²³, an idea that has already been explored in regard to Ustvolskaya's music earlier in this chapter. Indeed, it is certainly true that the avant-garde and the traditional – at first glance – seem an unlikely pairing: surely the motivations propelling the progressive stem from a rejection of the traditional? How exactly can Ustvolskaya successfully evolve through implementing a 'reversion' to history? This can be explored by contemplating Russian art aside from Western European traditions. To Ivashkin, the Russian style is preoccupied with introspection and an examination of generic memory. In this sense, her escape from conventions can be obtained through a regression to culture *before* the 'restrictions' of conventions became obligatory.

So what constitutes 'Russianness' in the twentieth century's avant-garde? In his *Neo-Primitivist Manifesto* of 1913, Alexander Shevchenko (Russian avant-garde painter and theorist, 1883–1948) discusses the motivations for his work: 'For the point of departure in our art we take the *lubok*, the primitive art form, and the icon, since we find in them the most acute, most direct perception of life – a purely painterly one, at that'.³²⁴ Thus, it would seem, this idea of creating a modern Russia through a return to Russian primitivism was a prominent idea of the time. Neo-primitivists looked eastwards for both their identity and motivation: a nod towards Asia freed them from European influences and enabled them to include an element of folk simplicity to their work. Shevchenko claimed that neo-primitivism was purely a Russian phenomenon as it combined Russian folk art with Indo-Persian art. To Shevchenko, Russia and the East were integrally interwoven and the 'Eastern spirit' was thus profoundly ingrained in the Russian national consciousness.³²⁵ The iconic properties of Ustvolskaya's music have already been discussed in Chapter 2 (and will be discussed further still in Chapter 5), but they have

³²³ Ivashkin, op. cit., p. 547.

³²⁴ Alexander Shevchenko, *Neo-Primitivism: ego teoriia, ego vozmozhnosti, ego dostizheniia* [*Neo-Primitivism: theory, potential, achievements*] (Moscow: Izd. avatora, 1913), p.5.

³²⁵ John E. Bowlst ed., *Russian Avant-garde: Theory and Criticism, 1902–1934* (New York: The Viking Press, 1976), p. 49.

further resonance here, as it transpires that the iconic existence of her music may indeed be indebted to prominent ideas of the early twentieth-century avant-garde, and notions of neo-primitivism. A further link is that the peak of avant-garde expression (1910–1914) coincided with a rediscovery of medieval Orthodox iconography and architecture as an elevated art form, which had a tremendous effect upon the neo-primitivist painters. Icons were considered the best examples of neo-primitivist art, owing to their bold and clear visual characteristics, inverted perspective and, perhaps most importantly, because of their transcendental nature.³²⁶ Following the fall of Rome and Constantinople, Moscow has often been considered the third cultural centre and the lone remaining defender of Orthodoxy; thus Orthodoxy and Russia have become inseparable in terms of the Russian people's national consciousness. To both Ustvolskaya and the early twentieth-century avant-garde, a reversion to a primitive Christianity thus also incorporates nationalistic substance.

The 1917 revolution originally gave Russian artists the opportunity to dispense with all that was antiquated and unjust. As Kazimir Malevich (painter, 1879–1935) puts it:

The thunder of the October canons helped us become innovative. We have come to clean the personality from academic accessories, to cauterise in the brain the mildew of the past and to re-establish time, space, cadence, rhythm and movement, the foundations of today.³²⁷

Remarkably, although Malevich is writing about the visual arts, his words could just as well be referring to music. Through Malevich, the ideas of Suprematism were introduced in the immediate years following the revolution. The general trend in philosophy, poetry, painting and art to turn towards a Gnostic idea of primitive Christianity was reflected in his ideas, which concerned the typological identity between Man's spirituality and the Universe. Kovtun summarises Malevich's visualisations:

³²⁶ John Bowlt, William M. Brumfield and Milos M. Velimirovic eds., 'Orthodoxy and the Avant-Garde: Sacred Images in the works of Goncarova, Malevich, and their Contemporaries', *Christianity and the Arts in Russia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), p. 149.

³²⁷ Evgueny Kovtun ed., Nick Cowling, Marie-Noëlle Dumaz trans., *Russian Avant-Garde (Art of Century)* (Vietnam: Baseline Co. Ltd., 2007), p. 28.

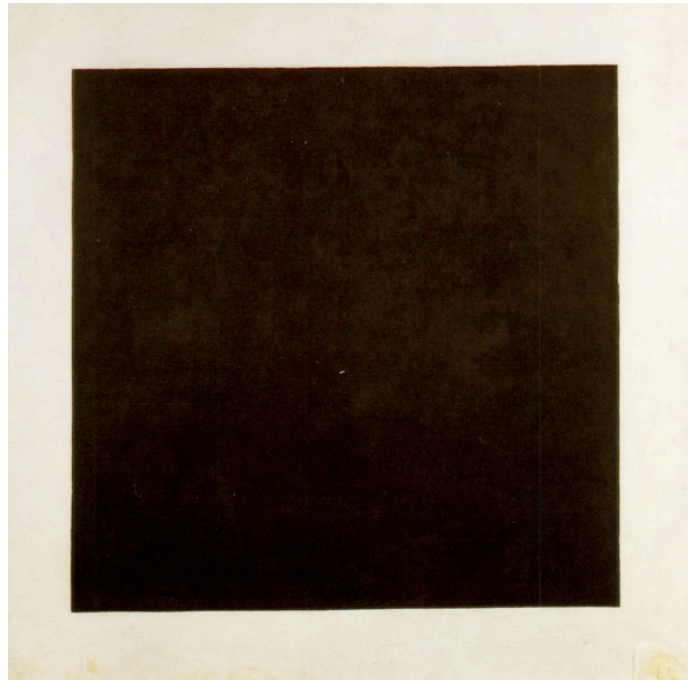
Man had begun to feel that he was not only the son of Earth but also an integral part of the Universe. The spiritual movement of Man's inner world generates subjective forms of space and time. The contact of these forms with reality transforms this reality in the work of the artist into art, therefore a material object whose essence is, in fact, spiritual. In this way the comprehension of the spiritual world as a microscopic universe brings a 'cosmic' understanding of the world...An independent world appears, an enclosed-world, possessing its own 'field' of attraction-gravitation, a 'small planet' with its own place in the harmony of the Universe.³²⁸

Kovtun's words can equally be applied to Ustvolskaya's aesthetic. Ustvolskaya's 'maximalism' or 'black hole music' – as it has been described³²⁹ – complies entirely with this description of Malevich's own aesthetic. Famously, Malevich's 'Black Square' (Illus. 3.11) was placed in what is known as the 'red/beautiful corner' in the Orthodox tradition, as the centrepiece of the 0.10 Exhibition in 1915. Furthermore, Malevich's Suprematism stressed the importance of feeling over anything objective. The simplest geometric forms are intersected in dynamic arrangements to convey speed and rhythm (Illus. 3.12). It was an urge to separate art from the representational and it strove to achieve the limits of painting. The visual space had to be purged from all symbolic content so that nothing could be signified and all that was left was personal thought. In just the same way Ustvolskaya's mature style purged the symphony, for example, from all musical conventions that could signify it as a symphony: instrumentation, rhythm, form, melodic development. Ustvolskaya's crotchet pulsations demonstrate the same aggressive rhythms as Malevich's geometric shapes and reflect the contrast and simplicity tangible in his paintings.

³²⁸ Kovtun, *op. cit.*, p. 8.

³²⁹ In conversation with Tishchenko, St Petersburg, 09/04/2008.

Illus. 3.11: Malevich: *Black Square*, 1915



Illus. 3.12: Malevich: *Suprematism*, 1916



Yet the avant-garde world that immediately followed the revolution was to be short-lived, and was quickly succeeded by a decade of destruction and devastation on account of the Soviet authorities' oppression of creativity and innovation in artistic culture. Composers often struggled with the extremes brought about by the conflicting ideas of the RAPM³³⁰ and ACM³³¹ before both organisations were quashed by the Decree on the Reformation of Literary and Artistic Organisations in 1932.³³² It is hardly surprising that Russian artists were finding it difficult to discover their own voice amidst such cultural upheaval.³³³

By the mid-1960s and into the following decades, the political pressure upon Soviet artists gradually began to change, as Leonid Brezhnev took over the running of the country and a period of economic stagnation ensued. Schwarz observes:

...the year 1965 proved an exciting one for music. The temperate stand of the new political leaders and the abolition of the odious watchdog commission with its verbose chairman, Ilyichev, released creative energies in Soviet music that had been dammed up since 1962...As the year 1965 progressed, the musical scene began to expand; it acquired a wider spectrum and more exploratory zeal.³³⁴

Reports as to the true extent of the relaxation of the party line during this period are, however, confusing. Schwarz continues by highlighting a letter received from Grigory Shneerson (Soviet critic and author) dated 20th June 1965 who observed the 'tolerance...but no acceptance' of dodecaphony.³³⁵ Furthermore, Schwarz selects a passage from Levitin's *Pravda* article to demonstrate the change in attitude towards those composers who continued on their path of avant-gardism. The composers are described as an 'unhealthy phenomenon', their work described as 'a tribute to fashion', their path as 'a danger' and the musical language as 'immediately forget[table]...senseless

³³⁰ Russian Association of Proletarian Musicians, see Chapter 6.

³³¹ The Association of Contemporary Music, see Chapter 6.

³³² Haas, *Leningrad's Modernists: Studies in Composition and Musical Thought: 1917–1932*, op. cit., pp. 35–53.

³³³ See Chapter 6 for a discussion of Soviet demands on artists in the wake of the revolution in greater depth.

³³⁴ Schwarz, op. cit., pp. 442–443.

³³⁵ Schwarz, *ibid.*, p. 448.

hammering'.³³⁶ This passage is significant, as contrary to many Pravda articles that had been before, it does not name the composers it berates.³³⁷

A strong underground movement began to thrive in poetry, painting and literature, as well as music. A new generation of underground composers,³³⁸ occupied by the spiritual and religious leanings that saturated the intelligentsia, flourished as they accessed newly published writings, such as Uspensky's³³⁹notated collection of the *znamenny raspev*, the novels by Alexander Solzhenitsyn (novelist, historian and Soviet critic 1918–2008), as well as the writings of religious activist Alexander Men (Orthodox priest, 1932–1990), who also lectured on the ideas of religious and spirituality and gained great popularity with Russian intellectual circles. The beginnings of this movement coincided with Ustvolskaya dispensing with her early style (as her period of silence that instigated her change of musical style began in 1961) and moving on to her uncompromising, more absolute, works from the 1964. Not only is the musical language in these works (especially from 1970) more unyielding and headstrong than her early works, but they also begin to include unambiguously religious subtitles.

Ustvolskaya belligerently denied being part of any great movement in the arts but the development in her work can be directly traced to the more general patterns evident in wider intellectual circles. The spiritual preoccupations of the Soviet avant-garde continued right through to the 1980s (and even further, beyond the collapse of the Soviet Union).³⁴⁰ As has been examined, Ustvolskaya's musical language became more extreme, the sole vehicle for her spiritual expression. Not content with religious subtitles, from the 1980s, Ustvolskaya began to include long religious texts in her work. This is mirrored by compositional activity amongst the avant-garde composers in 1980s Russia: such explicit works as *Agnus Dei for four instruments a cappella* (1985) by Alexander Knaifel (b. 1943) or his *God, ode after Derzhavin for chorus and*

³³⁶ Yuri Levitin, *Pravda*, 20/06/1965.

³³⁷ Schwarz, op. cit., pp. 448–450.

³³⁸ This group of composers included Yury Butsko (b. 1938), Alemdar Karamanov (1934–2007), Andrei Volkonsky (1933–2008), Schnittke and Gubaidulina.

³³⁹ Significantly, Uspensky worked in the same college as Ustvolskaya, as well as the St Petersburg Conservatory.

³⁴⁰ Ivan Moody, *Modernism and Orthodox Spirituality in Contemporary Music* (Joensuu: The International Society for Orthodox Church Music, Institute of Musicology, Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts, 2014), pp. 96–160.

children's chorus (1985), *Psalm 148 for chorus* (1989) by Andrei Volkonsky (1933–2008) or *Ave, Maria* (1989) by Vyacheslav Artyomov (b. 1940) truly characterise the intellectual spirit of the 1980s, and the spiritual direction of the avant-garde in the twentieth-century.³⁴¹

3.2.3: Revolution: A Maximalist Minimalism

The correlation of Ustvolskaya's music with that of the Soviet avant-garde is as distinctive as it is undeniable, despite her protests. But it has often been stated that Ustvolskaya's work exists as a form of minimalism: her Grand Duet is categorised by rutracker.org as 'Avant-garde/Minimalism/Strings'³⁴², she is named the 'high priestess of sado-minimalism'³⁴³ and pianist Ingrid Jacoby writes that the ending of Ustvolskaya's Piano Concerto is 'akin to minimalism.'³⁴⁴ The simplicity in her music has led Levon Hakobian to suggest that it has its origins in 'some fervent, almost barbaric religion'³⁴⁵, Ivashkin presented a paper at an International Symposium in Amsterdam in 2011 entitled 'Galina Ustvolskaya: Minimalist or Maximalist?'³⁴⁶ and a festival entitled 'Deep Minimalism' that is planned at the Southbank Centre in London in 2016 will include performances of her music. Although the definition of minimalism is itself ambiguous and Ustvolskaya fiercely rejected any attempt to pigeon-hole her music in any such a way, upon first hearing her later works in particular, characterised as they are by a rhythmic vacuum and repetitive harmonic cells, a comparison is at first somewhat unavoidable. Indeed, Ustvolskaya features in Arnold Whittall's book *Musical Composition in the*

³⁴¹ Schmelz, op. cit..

³⁴² Unknown author, <<http://rutracker.org/forum/viewtopic.php?t=1587995>> (accessed on 25/03/2015).

³⁴³ David Fanning, 'Sisters of Mercy', *The Musical Times*, Vol. 136, no. 1829 (1995), pp. 364–365.

³⁴⁴ Ingrid Jacoby, CD liner notes: *Shostakovich and Ustvolskaya: Piano Concertos*, Dutton CDSA 6804, Watford, UK, 2002.

³⁴⁵ Levon Hakobian, *Music of the Soviet Age, 1917–1987* (Stockholm: Melos Music Literature, 1998), p. 243.

³⁴⁶ For symposium details see: Unknown author, *International Symposium: Galina Ustvolskaya: New Perspectives* <http://ustvolskaya.org/Symposium_Galina_Ustvolskaya.pdf> (accessed on 25/03/2015).

Twentieth Century within the chapter ‘The Minimalist Experiment’, which maintains that Ustvolskaya’s *Compositions* are ‘reduced in their musical material to the minimum required for music’.³⁴⁷ It is clear how her link to the minimalist movement has been cultivated, to continue to quote Whittall:

Minimalist music itself might be thought modernist in its divided nature, split between the need to challenge traditional concepts of ‘the work’ and the no less patent need to conform to traditional methods of dissemination (concerts, recordings, publishing materials). Many minimalist composers have undoubtedly found these needs a twin strength rather than a weakness. A leading feature in their music is the concern to experiment with the nature of musical experience itself, and to seek alternatives to the subtle, diversified complexities of modernism and modern classicism alike... . The music is concerned less with achieving a sublime stasis, more with clearly detectable transformation, with process in very simple and direct ways.³⁴⁸

Ustvolskaya’s work easily assimilates these values and as a result much of her catalogue could be categorised accordingly. Minimalist composers, through extensive experimentalism, use the purity and simplicity of their music as a reaction to traditionally established genres and concepts. A trend towards the mystical can also be identified as minimalist composers transcend conventional musical language in order to evoke an experience beyond the realms of aesthetics. Minimalist music is also far less likely to induce the change of the listener’s perspective that is usually invoked by repeated listening to composers of music with increasing complexities. Instead, the generation of a trance-like state is more likely, complete with a consequential quasi-ritualistic quality.

Further characteristics of eminent minimalist composers have reverberations in our understanding of Ustvolskaya’s work. The prominence of the pitch *C* in the compositions of Terry Riley (b. 1935) is of particular relevance, specifically in his widely influential and aptly named piece *In C* (1964).³⁴⁹ This pitch – a *C* – is of course minimalist itself,³⁵⁰ but can also be

³⁴⁷ Arnold Whittall, *Musical Composition in the Twentieth Century* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), pp. 338–339.

³⁴⁸ Whittall, *ibid.*, pp. 325–326.

³⁴⁹ Fifty-three varied melodic fragments are played in any order and ensemble members may move on to the next fragment whenever they please. The overall effect is superimposed fragments upon a backdrop of *C*s.

³⁵⁰ Middle *C* is perhaps the simplest note for pianists. Found in the middle of the piano, it is devoid of extremity of pitch in terms of the notes of the piano, and is the first note many

equated with Ustvolskaya's use of the pitch D \flat , which Dullaghan believes lies at the heart of her compositions (Ex. 3.13). The D \flat (in the middle of the keyboard) is the core of the Sonata for Violin and Piano, all contrasting sections of Piano Sonata No. 5 (the entire basis of this piece, which sees the superimposition of melodic fragments, is also Ustvolskayan as it consists of manipulation and repetition of short melodic cells, that would form the basis of many of her later works) and Symphony No. 5.³⁵¹

Ex. 3.13: Piano Sonata No. 5, figure 9: prominence of D \flat



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Riley's *In C* consists of slowly evolving music and includes repeated melodic cells that employ a constant pulse, reducing the traditions of Western music to its very basic elements. Reich, Riley, La Monte Young (b. 1935) and Philip Glass (b. 1937) all employed their style of minimalism as a reaction against the complexity of the traditional canon. As Whittall puts it:

Alongside the experimentation of Cage and his followers, minimalist music seemed to offer an alternative to the twentieth-century's persistent concern with preserving or extending earlier stylistic and generic traditions, and with devising complex, avant-garde alternatives to those traditions.³⁵²

children are taught when they first approach the keyboard. Furthermore, its major scale includes no accidentals and is played only on the white notes of the piano, and it has visual similarities in both the treble and bass clefs.

³⁵¹ Dullaghan, op. cit., p. 87.

³⁵² Whittall, *Musical Composition in the Twentieth Century*, op. cit., p. 325.

In the same vein as Ustvolskaya, one technique these minimalist composers employed was to look at other traditions to find answers to the problems posed by the progression of western art music, including aspects of orientalism and primitivism. Glass worked with Ravi Shankar (Indian musician, sitar player, 1920–2012) during his studies in Paris. Furthermore, Reich studied the tabla under Alla Rakha (Indian tabla player, 1919–2000), as well as pursuing lessons in African drumming and Balinese gamelan.³⁵³ These activities were inevitably going to have an impact on the direction of their compositions. Take, for example, Reich's *Music for Pieces of Wood* (1973) that demonstrates the remarkable influence of African drumming³⁵⁴: aside from the parallels of Reich's chosen instrumentation and the wooden box that Ustvolskaya would require from her percussionist in *Composition No. 2* (completed contemporaneously), there are further parallels in terms of additive metre, the manipulation of metric hierarchy (positioning of bar lines) and incessant repetition of a constant tempo. The rhythms are bold and unceasing: rhythmic momentum is the overriding characteristic of the work. Yet there are not only metric reverberations that can be observed: the 1970s saw Glass and Reich dispense with the repetition of these abstract works and settle on what Cross describes as 'non-narrative, ritual presentations',³⁵⁵ which also has relevance with regard to Ustvolskaya's ritual.

Reich's use of the interaction between music and speech patterns also adheres to the trend of artistic realism, of which Ustvolskaya was an avid disciple. Reich's *Different Trains* (1988) for multi-tracked string quartet and speech and train sounds, is entirely based upon speech patterns, although it never 'degenerates into mechanical parroting'.³⁵⁶ This has resonance with the inflections implied in Ustvolskaya's chant-like musical phrases. Orthodox chant is entirely dependent upon the direction of the text (in terms of phrase length, emphasis, vocal tessitura, vocal inflections, rhythm etc.) so the chant-like phrases in Ustvolskaya's music have derived directly from the voice (see Chapter 5). Both composers embrace this sense of including 'environmental' or

³⁵³ Paul Griffiths, *Modern Music: The Avant-Garde Since 1945* (London: J M Dent and Sons Ltd., 1981), pp. 177–178.

³⁵⁴ Whittall, *Musical Composition in the Twentieth Century*, op. cit., p. 325.

³⁵⁵ Cross, op. cit., p. 173.

³⁵⁶ Whittall, *Musical Composition in the Twentieth Century*, op. cit., p. 330.

‘non-musical’ noise in order to create, as Reich himself describes it, ‘both a documentary and a musical reality’.³⁵⁷ Although recorded train sounds are – on the surface – far removed from Ustvolskaya’s chamber music, a similarity drawn between the extramusical, artistic realist content in both Reich’s and Ustvolskaya’s music is not so far-fetched.

There are also Ustvolskayan aspects to Reich’s *City Life* (1994–1995), which begins on a chorale that consists of homophonic scoring with additive, irregular metre. The bars irregularly interchange between 2/4 and 3/4, and Reich places further crotchet rests to disrupt any sense of regular beat. In short, there is no emphasis imposed by the bar lines and chosen time signatures as there are no clear downbeats (Ex. 3.14). Reich’s chorale is not directed to a conclusion because of its rhetorical position,³⁵⁸ a technique that concurs with Ustvolskaya’s frenetic endings, which often end with cadence points that lack a sense of finality.

Ex. 3.14: Reich, *City Life*, first movement, opening



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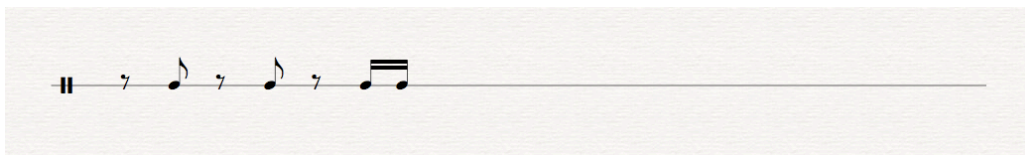
There are no better examples through which to explore how Ustvolskaya’s music mirrors the minimalist aesthetic than her Compositions Nos. 1, 2, and 3 (1970–1975). Composition No. 1, *Dona Nobis Pacem* is scored for piano, piccolo and tuba. It wastes no time establishing the violence and aggression

³⁵⁷ Steve Reich, CD liner notes: ‘Composer’s Notes’, *Different Trains: The Smith Quartet*, Signum, SIGCD064, Perivale: UK, 2005.

³⁵⁸ Cross discusses Reich’s *City Life* in some detail with regards to its relation to Stravinsky’s compositional approaches. He argues that the opening chorale is directly indebted to the final chorale of Stravinsky’s *Symphonies of Wind Instruments*. This link corroborates the minimalist link with Ustvolskaya, as Ustvolskaya’s debt to Stravinsky is regularly explored during the course of this thesis. Cross, op. cit., p. 173.

found throughout all three pieces. Once more, there are no bar lines or time signatures, so the audience is unable to deduce any regular sense of metre. Much like the opening of *City Life*, the opening to Composition No. 1 includes irregular rests in the solo tuba line, which further disrupt the metric organisation. To further this sense of metric freedom, the tuba completes its solo line with a pause. Although there are moments of syncopation in all three Compositions, the works are all essentially homophonic because of the emphatic crotchet pulse, which continues throughout the pieces: although the metric hierarchy is disrupted, the beat remains clear. The tuba that opens Composition No. 1 articulates the rhythmic cell that Ustvolskaya is to manipulate throughout the whole of the single work (Ex. 3.15). In terms of tonality, this rhythmic cell is originally placed as an F, G, F#, G #, A. By figure 5, the motif has been somewhat altered to include clusters in the piano part and additional notes fill in the quaver rests; yet the rhythmic substance stays the same. By the time figure 9 arrives, the right hand in the piano shows the same motif, although it has doubled in time. A further difference is that because the rests have been ‘filled in’, the second set of semiquavers repeat the pattern of the first, just transposed up a semitone. This is only a minor difference, however, and exemplifies how Ustvolskaya used the narrowest scope of musical material to create an entire work. Ustvolskaya expands this melodic manipulation by directing the pianist, by figure 12, to strike the keys in unison in both hands repetitively, altering the rhythm even further (through repeating the first three clusters of the new phrase) by figure 14.

Ex. 3.15: Composition No. 1, opening rhythmic motif found first in tuba



Ustvolskaya constantly expanded the musical possibilities of this original motif in order to generate her extraordinary Composition No. 1. However, this is not the only building block she uses (although it is arguably the most important):

reinforced by a single note in the tuba at ‘cadence’ points.³⁶⁰ There is an angry breakthrough, in figure 59, of the previous anguish found in the earlier movements (through an appearance of the major melodic motif in the right hand of the piano and the oscillating triplet motif in the piccolo) but otherwise this movement brings a post-climactic moment of benevolence. It once more resonates with the opening of *City Life* and, in turn, with the ending of Stravinsky’s *Symphony of Wind Instruments*.

Ustvolskaya’s manipulation of small melodic cells is once more demonstrated in her Composition No. 2, scored for piano, eight double basses and wooden box. The primary melodic cell is found as a solo bass line in the left hand of the piano at Figure 2. Once more, Ustvolskaya expands and fragments the tonal and rhythmic qualities of this phrase to comprise the whole work. As Bradshaw puts it when she considers the entire structure of Composition No. 2, each of the ten sections is a ‘set of permutation repeats of material, which adds in or excises portions of itself’.³⁶¹ The other melodic cell is a motif comprising crotchets articulated in parallel motion on the double basses in figure 2. Ustvolskaya treats the double bass ensemble as one entity throughout the work as they are, almost without exception, directed to play in a homophonic fashion, with the same dynamic and articulation marks placed throughout all parts. The silences and rests in these parts (marked here with sequential down-bows) give the grunting double basses an unpredictable quality. The general pauses that occur during the piece, and which are juxtaposed with the volume and violence found elsewhere, provide an often-overwhelming sense of suspense. The repetition is exhausting for both the audience and the performers. Every single note in each part is marked with an accent and the first note in the double basses with the dynamic marking *ffsf* greets the audience. In addition, each of the double bass notes in the first phrase is marked with its own *subito forte* on each consecutive note. Jonathan Vickery provides a list of the most characteristic examples of minimal art form that echoes the aesthetics here present in Composition No. 2: ‘[Minimalism is] non-compositional, pre-planned, repetitive, and made of uninflected, pre-

³⁶⁰ These ‘cadences’ are not cadences in a conventional sense, as there are no obvious harmonic patterns, but the tuba note does complete the end of the piano’s musical phrase, which is also reinforced by a pause at the end of the line.

³⁶¹ Bradshaw, op. cit., p. 33.

fabricated industrial materials.³⁶² The repetition that is found in the piano part from figure 34, and again in figures 46–57, and 58–62 is indeed quasi-industrial in its mechanical and cyclical repetition (Ex. 3.17). Clarity and precision was paramount in Ustvolskaya’s repetitive Compositions. In her autograph of Composition No. 2, Ustvolskaya drew vertical, coloured lines down the score to ensure the correct position of each beat in relation to the other parts.³⁶³ This direction is not found on the first published Sikorski edition, but is also written in Ustvolskaya’s own hand on her own copy of the Sikorski first edition, which is now also in the PSS. The repetitive nature of the work, as well as the detail placed by Ustvolskaya on the score, makes it difficult to decipher her spidery autographs. These autographs also emphasise Ustvolskaya’s directions for sudden emphasis and strong impulses through her use of multiple exclamation marks. Composition No. 2 is especially submerged in exclamation marks in her own hand, focusing attention on her fervent designs and evidence how a minimal amount of musical material can result in maximum impact.

Ex. 3.17: Composition No. 2, figure 55



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In contrast to the benevolent chorale at the end of Composition No. 1, the treatment of chorale in Composition No. 2 is relentless. Figures 42–43, for

³⁶² Jonathan Vickery, Dana Arnold and Margaret Iversen eds., ‘Art and the Ethical: Modernism and the Problem of Minimalism’, *Art and Thought* (Malden: Blackwell Publishing Company, 2003), p. 111.

³⁶³ Held at the PSS and accessed by the author in September 2008.

example, comprise a homophonic, block texture that changes harmonically with each chord. Again, each note is marked *subito forte*, but this time the starting point is *ffffsf* and Ustvolskaya still demands a *poco crescendo*. Yet it still retains many of the minimalist qualities identified: this passage is rhythmically repetitive (minimally rhythmic/metric), moves in stepwise movement in unison or parallel (minimally melodic or harmonic), it develops at a constant tempo, all working together to create a hypnotic, ritualistic character to the piece, which is continued into the third work in this cycle Composition No. 3, *Benedictus Qui Venit*. This final work in the cycle is stark and static in character, and leaves the audience wondering whether it is possible for them to truly achieve redemption in this final act of the trilogy (it is completely different in character from a conventional, liturgical *Benedictus*). Once more, repetition is paramount and a minimal amount of motivic material characterises this composition: the first flute plays only a crotchet F# at various intervals until figure 5. This is marked in the autograph copy (held at the PSS): *Fl. I similo solo f espr. na f#*. In other words, this repetitive F# is the leading voice of this entire section. Devoid of any aesthetic beauty, whenever this minimalist melody returns, it is marked *espr.* in the score.

The questions surrounding defining minimalism certainly hinder any pursuit of the categorisation of Ustvolskaya's music in such terms, and have remained unresolved since the 1960s. If minimalism is defined merely as 'a movement'³⁶⁴, then Ustvolskaya's music cannot be considered 'minimalist' at all: Ustvolskaya was never consciously engaged in the proliferation of any movement in the arts, let alone the minimalist movement on the other side of the Iron Curtain, developing during a different decade and on a different continent. The discussion here must be centred upon the similarities between minimalist aesthetics and Ustvolskaya's music.

As has been demonstrated, there are certainly some undeniable resonances of the minimalist aesthetic in Ustvolskaya's work, yet Ustvolskaya pushes her aesthetic, once more, to a further extreme by manipulating minimal building blocks from where she starts to transform the piece into a highly-pressured work with moments of dramatic suspense. This grandeur is actually

³⁶⁴ Edward Strickland, *Minimalism: Origins* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1993), p. 7.

rather distant from the minimalist aesthetic from which she starts. This expansion of minimalist material is perhaps what Tishchenko is referring to as he described Ustvolskaya's music as 'black hole music'. It is almost as if Ustvolskaya manipulates minimalist aesthetics herself to become maximalist events: Ivashkin's maximalist minimalism.³⁶⁵

Furthermore, Ustvolskaya explored a similar aesthetic to the minimalists in order to explore her ideas of ritualism and primitivism, and to dispense with the traditional conventions of which she so desperately wished to be rid. A discussion of Ustvolskaya's discontentment with European traditions has already been addressed, but perhaps this is not all from which Ustvolskaya wished to be distanced: there were trends and models closer to home from which she felt inclined to rid herself. Ustvolskaya, once more, desired only to distance herself from everything and everyone.

3.3: Final Thoughts: A Russian Minimalism

Yet there is a school of composing that must be considered as a postlude to the previous two sub-chapters. As a member of the Soviet avant-garde, Vladimir Martynov (b. 1946) turned to his own form of Minimalism as a response to both the European models and the activities of Russian composers in the mid-twentieth century. Born in 1946 in Moscow, Martynov was a generation younger than Ustvolskaya and therefore had experienced many of the same socio-political hurdles as her, just at a different point of his life and career.

Martynov began his career as a member of the emerging avant-garde following his graduation from the Moscow Conservatory in 1971, with works that explored serialist and dodecaphonic techniques, yet his research was firmly rooted in the traditional music of the Renaissance era and the music of the Western Middle Ages. He was also a collector of folk music during his extensive travels around Russia, the Northern Caucasus, Central Pamir and regions of Tajikistan, a diversity of interests that was to direct the range of

³⁶⁵ Alexander Ivashkin, *Galina Ustvolskaya: Minimalist or Maximalist?* paper delivered at International Symposium Galina Ustvolskaya: New Perspectives, BAM Zaal, Amsterdam, The Netherlands, May 2011.

styles that Martynov would explore later in life. Between 1976 and 1978, Martynov left behind the ‘hyper-constructivism’ of his avant-garde works in favour of a more minimalist composition: a ‘new simplicity’ that embraced religious and ritualistic themes.³⁶⁶ In 1978 Martynov abandoned composing to devote his life to his spiritual calling, teaching at the Theological Institute of the Troitsko-Sergievskaya Lavra where he studied the manuscripts of ancient Russian singing, including examples taken from monasteries, although he returned to composition in 1984 (primarily in his minimalist style).³⁶⁷

Martynov’s dissatisfaction with the Soviet avant-garde meant that he – in the same manner as Ustvolskaya – was forced to look elsewhere for his musical inspiration. In fact, Martynov was so dissatisfied that he held a belief that the end of the compositional era was imminent and the abandonment of modernism was essential to be able to attain a new synthesis. To Martynov, the solution to these problems could be found in the ritualisation of music through which ‘cosmic harmony’ could be achieved.³⁶⁸

Martynov’s ‘new simplicity’ began after he discovered Riley’s *In C* during the underground Russian premiere of the momentous work in Moscow by Andrei Lubimov (pianist, b. 1944) in 1968. Martynov was led to a musical style that embraced minimalism alongside the Oriental aesthetics that he had studied. His music attempted to be ‘stylistically universal’, creating a synthesis between ancient truths and the modern time. Margarita Katunyan summarises the oppositions and dichotomies that Martynov’s music attempts to straddle:

³⁶⁶ This period also saw Martynov’s exploration of historical musical and art-rock styles and genres.

³⁶⁷ Tatiana Grindenko, *Vladimir Martynov* <http://www.record-one.com/show.php?type=artistis_company &lng=E&id=36> (accessed on 07/16/2005).

³⁶⁸ Tara Wilson, *Vladimir Martynov and the ‘Rebirth’ of (Russian) Music: Space, Time, Ritual and Performance*, paper delivered at (M)other Russia; A Study Day Researching and Performing Russian Music: Centre for Russian Music/CCMC – Culture, Composition, Politics (Series 1), Goldsmiths College, University of London, 14/02/2009.

It implies all the essential features of contemporary culture, its tendencies towards synthesis, which brings together oppositions of a varied nature: East and West, the contemporary and the archaic, the elite and the 'low culture', the rational and the intuitive, the secular and the religious, the professional tradition and the folklore, the author and the anonymous, the musical and the extra-musical, the immanent and the syncretism.³⁶⁹

Martynov's new simplicity brings answers to the same questions surrounding the validity of the avant-garde as Ustvolskaya was asking, and both composers, in terms of musical aesthetics, discovered a similar solution. The diversity of ideas mentioned by Katunyan incorporates each composer's personal journey: Martynov was a representative of the Soviet avant-garde, and then willingly undertook a 'silent' period before changing his style and becoming the leader of a new generation of Post-Modernists. Ustvolskaya had an equally diverse background: first a successful Soviet composer and leading emerging composer under the wing of Shostakovich; a similar 'silent period' (1961–64) when she re-evaluated her work; and later her uncompromising, isolated, quasi-minimalist, mature style. This is a notable trend in terms of the Soviet minimalist movement as Pärt also indulged in a period of silence before he started composing his 'minimalist' music (1971–76). Furthermore, Ustvolskaya's inclusion of folk ideas and use of *znamenny raspev* straddles and unifies all the dichotomies found in Katunyan's observations.

Martynov's silent period was spent in religious research and meditation; he believed his discovery of early Russian church singing to have entirely changed his own consciousness and that true exposure to that 'finds the key to understanding of all musical culture as a whole'.³⁷⁰ It is likely that Ustvolskaya's silent period was spent in a similar fashion, when the change in her musical outcome, personal behaviour and the newfound prominence of her personal beliefs that succeeded the time, are considered. In both composers' 'mature periods' the interrelation of music and ritual presides, as they both attempt to invoke ideas of non-academic cultures that had no place in the Russian avant-garde. Both Ustvolskaya and Martynov attempted to transform

³⁶⁹ Margarita Katunyan, 'Vladimir Martynov's "New Sacral Space"', *Devotio Moderna, Center of Development and Support of New Music*

<http://www.devotiomoderna.ru/eng/articles/80_news/php> (accessed on 07/16/2005).

³⁷⁰ Katunyan, *ibid.*, p. 3.

the secular ‘concert’ arena of the performance of their work into a wider ‘sacral space’. Ustvol'skaya is, once more, silent on the subject, but Martynov sheds more light:

A new sacral space is an attempt to confront the decay of the modern world by creating a new cultural synthesis. This can be done on the crossroads of different cultures and traditions, which together produce many new cultural contexts that merge into one multi-dimensional text. A new sacral space does not claim to create new forms that would compete with the religious ones. Its purpose is to make wider the sacral space that exists in the liturgy, to go beyond it by sanctifying the unsanctified or de-sanctified fields of time and space, i.e. the ones devoid of their church life. In the Middle Ages all space was sacral, the same was in pagan times. All of modernism is devoted to the problem of losing God. The turning point is what Nietzsche said: ‘God is dead’. This is connected with the desacralisation of culture, of all our space, time, life, *socium*. Now the pendulum is moving back – the sacral space is being restored. A new sacral space is not an attempt to create a new religion or new forms of worship. It means to collect the stones of the destroyed Jerusalem. We are trying to collect what has been destroyed.³⁷¹

This coherently explicates the function of Ustvol'skaya's music: it is not religious, liturgical *or* secular. The performance of her work in secular, concert surroundings enabled Ustvol'skaya to reclaim an ancient sacral space: thus her ‘spiritual’ music sees a return to an uncorrupted rapport with God. The idea of ‘new sacral space’ brings with it a synthesis of archaic and modern (and even post-modern) eras, and sees a dialogue between tradition and revolution. Martynov's ‘new sacral space’ is not, therefore, limited to his individual work as a composer but extends to a cultural trend of musical-ritual forms. In terms of how this manifests as musical language, the first and foremost technique is the inclusion of ancient music. In such pieces as *Lamentations of Jeremiah* (1992) and *Stabat Mater* (1994) Martynov introduces the idea of what Katunyan has identified as, ‘Text as sacral structure’. Martynov treats his selected text strictly canonically: if the canon is precisely adhered to, then the sacral semantic it represents will always be evident. Like Ustvol'skaya, he includes direct quotations from the Byzantine and Russian Orthodox liturgies, as well as retaining the symbolic principles of ritual material (e.g. in *Canticum*,

³⁷¹ Katunyan, *ibid.*, p. 4.

Martynov includes eight psalm modes to represent St. Francis of Assisi's veneration of the eight creations).³⁷²

Although the aesthetics and theology of Martynov's music resonate with Ustvolskaya's own, the content of composer Knaifel's music shows another tangible correlation, as his works of the 1970s sound so very similar to Ustvolskaya's style. Svetlana Savenko illuminates the implementation of ostinato in Knaifel's music, and identifies repetitive rhythmic impulse as the key driving force behind his early works of the 1960s and 1970s.³⁷³ Indeed, Knaifel's own words echo Savenko's assertions: 'Rhythm for me is an essential, decisive component of musical material ... But I treat rhythm in a broad sense – as form of motion and motion as form of life'.³⁷⁴ One of Knaifel's earliest works – *Two Pieces for Flute, Viola, Piano and Percussion Instruments* (1962) – includes an ostinato (played first in the viola in the first bar of the piece), which is persistently repeated throughout the entire work. A later work, *Musique Militaire* (1964), does not include any bar lines as rhythmic freedom prevails and 'regularly repeated ostinato patterns are juxtaposed with metrically unstable ones'³⁷⁵: it is impossible for the listener to ascertain any impression of an established, regular metre.

There are several substantial similarities between these works and Ustvolskaya's aesthetics (rhythmic drive, repetition, the idea of chamber music as a vehicle for large-scale performance, irregular metric constructs) but it is perhaps Knaifel's *Lamento* for solo cello (1967)³⁷⁶ that tends to evoke the most obvious parallels between his 'maximalist minimalism' and Ustvolskaya's. In this work, Knaifel is concerned with the timbral possibilities and complexities that can arise from virtuosic performance of the cello.³⁷⁷ The solo instrumental

³⁷² These eight creations are listed in his poem 'The Canticle of the Creatures': Brother Sun, Sister Moon, Brother Wind, Brother Air, Sister Water, Brother Fire, Sister Mother Earth and Sister Death. The number eight further surrounds the entire structure, form, repetition, melody, modality and semantic substance of Martynov's *Canticum* in addition to the use of the eight Modes. For a further analytical account, see: Katunyan, *ibid.*, pp. 6–9.

³⁷³ Svetlana Savenko, Valeria Stefanovna Tsenova ed., 'The Magic of Alexander Knaifel's Message', *Ex Oriente ...III: Eight Composers from the Former USSR* (Berlin: E. Kuhn, 2003), pp.176–178.

³⁷⁴ Hannelore Gerlach, *Fünfzig sowjetische Komponisten: Fakten und Reflexionen [Fifty Soviet Composers: Facts and Reflections]* (Leipzig, Dresden: Peter, 1984).

³⁷⁵ Savenko, *op. cit.*, pp. 176.

³⁷⁶ The work was, however, revised in the late 1980s and then dedicated to the Russian choreographer Leonid Jakobson, who had died in 1975.

³⁷⁷ Knaifel himself started his musical career as a cellist, studying with Rostropovich at the

lines elicit a density of sound that, palpably influenced by the music of Ustvolskaya, moves with haste between extremes: passionate indignation juxtaposed by sections of transcendent repose. The repeated semiquaver impulses that litter the first movement make it impossible for the listener to identify the metric patterns; they allude (in the same vein as Ustvolskaya) to Orthodox chant. At the end of this work, Knaifel instructs the cellist to sing with a closed mouth to exploit even further the timbral possibilities of the performance, as well as fostering the connection to the music of the Orthodox liturgy.

Ustvolskaya was never able to remove herself from the influence of her cultural upbringing and education, despite the extreme individualism in her musical language. Her life, home and education were always in St Petersburg and, through the horrors and history that the city suffered, this is perhaps where she gained most of the inspiration for her music: she needed a remedy for the pains her people had suffered. This melancholy has often been singled out as a feature of the Russian character as much as turning to a spirituality or mysticism in search of answers.³⁷⁸ Russian composers have always seen themselves as separate from the European tradition and have thus been in pursuit of establishing their own tradition, which is readily distinguishable from that of their European counterparts (see Chapter 3.1). Yet by the very nature of the music Russian composers have created over the past 170 years, they cannot be disconnected from the European canon. Ustvolskaya is no exception and this chapter has explored her inexorable connection to both the Russian and the Western European traditions.

However, Ustvolskaya's music was far from traditional. Through her innovations with instrumentation, rhythm, form, harmonic clusters and radical manipulation of conventional polyphony, her music was assertively forward thinking and independent, despite the limitations imposed upon her by the Soviet authorities. Ustvolskaya revolutionised many of the traditional musical forms from a small room in her St Petersburg apartment. Here she invented a new musical language that sympathised with revolutionary Eurasian ideas,

Moscow Conservatory.

³⁷⁸ Nalimova, op. cit., pp. 114–115.

embraced the post-1917 enthusiasm of avant-garde innovators, and reinvented minimalism as a unique, Russian form.

So, was Ustvolskaya a traditionalist or a revolutionary? In the most idiosyncratic Russian fashion, the answer to this question is not clear-cut: there is palpable evidence that she fully embraced – and even paid homage to – both. The answer can be seen through the model of Martynov and the tangible answers he brings. In the 1960s Ustvolskaya was, like Martynov, decidedly dissatisfied with the modernist music that she was witnessing. Neither the official Soviet music nor underground avant-gardism was providing the universal truths with which she was becoming increasingly occupied. The avant-garde of the 1910s/1920s, which had provided an artistic framework from which she could select a certain amount of inspiration, was no longer culturally relevant by the end of the 1950s. Ustvolskaya found her answer in the combination of tradition and revolution by remembering the past in order to ascertain identity in the present and create a sacral space for the future. Ustvolskaya used the Russian tradition (in its myriad forms) to forsake her path of conditioning, thus creating a revolutionary synthesis of traditions, styles, eras and genres. Ustvolskaya's isolated style is culturally diverse but stands apart. It is mystical yet rational, strictly traditional yet – through this, radical revolutionism – her very own *Russian Heritage*.

The Shostakovich Years: The Anxiety of Influence

Chapter 4

I am convinced that the music of G. I. Ustvolskaya will achieve world fame, and be valued by all who hold truth to be the essential element of music.

Dmitri Dmitrievich Shostakovich³⁷⁹

Galina Ustvolskaya constantly – and very publicly – denied any cultural influence upon her work, not least by her former composition teacher Dmitri Shostakovich. Yet, as a composer on the St Petersburg scene and a professional figure who had risen through the ranks of a rigorous musical education system, Ustvolskaya was undeniably composing from within a cultural context that included her educative background. Ustvolskaya's intentional rejection of any form of cultural expectation can clearly be seen attitude towards Shostakovich and her rejection of his musical influence, particularly during the latter part of her life and career. Much has been written about the relationship between these two composers, and it is a topic that has drawn particular attention from the West: against Ustvolskaya's wishes, it is perhaps their infamous falling-out that has brought her most international notoriety.

Ustvolskaya was deeply exasperated and hurt that even at 80 she was persistently called a student of Shostakovich: 'Why is it not said about Schedrin, that he is Shaporin's student? About Slonimsky, that he is Evlakhov's student? Why is the only thing I hear about me that I am: Shostakovich's student, a Shostakovich graduate?!' She saw that too many musicologists and journalists around the world refuse to really listen to **her** music, to recognize its independent existence.³⁸⁰

Although there is merit in the consideration of their personal relationship as it explicates many of her musical motivations, all too often there is little musical analysis involved in the discussion, and the somewhat journalistic fascination

³⁷⁹ Letter 28 to Boris Tishchenko, dated 17/04/1970, shown to author by Tishchenko, St Petersburg, 09/04/2008.

³⁸⁰ Bagrenin, <www.ustvolskaya.org> (accessed on 02/06/2014).

with the two composers' romantic entwinement understates – or even completely ignores – the calibre of Ustvol'skaya's music. Nevertheless, as is the case with all composers, the crossover between Ustvol'skaya's personal and professional life is wholly significant when considering the works of her catalogue, as she fiercely endeavoured to avoid Shostakovich's influence. What separates the Ustvol'skaya/Shostakovich connection from other pedagogical relationships is the strength of Ustvol'skaya's reciprocal influence upon her teacher. Any examination of the relationship between the pair, should consider the alternating musical influence between them to fill the literary void that surrounds this issue.

4.1: A Personal Relationship

It is evident that Shostakovich greatly valued Ustvol'skaya as a fellow composer rather than merely as a student: Upon hearing a performance of Ustvol'skaya's Octet for the first time, Shostakovich left in the interval, later writing to Tishchenko afterwards that it had made such a deep impression upon him that he could not find it in himself to stay for the second half of the concert.³⁸¹ Reinforcing this anecdote, Louis Blois draws attention to a letter (now destroyed) from Shostakovich to Ustvol'skaya: 'It is not you who are influenced by me; rather it is I who am influenced by you'.³⁸²

That both composers once had a close relationship remains undisputed. This association commenced during her studentship in his composition class between 1937 and 1947 (this extraordinary length of her undergraduate studies was due to the interruption of the Second World War).³⁸³ Ustvol'skaya joined the Composers' Union when she graduated in 1948 and soon bypassed the

³⁸¹ Gladkova's monograph refers to Khentova's interview with Ustvol'skaya. Sofiya Khentova, *V mire Shostakovicha [In Shostakovich's World]* (Moscow: Kompozitor, 1996), pp. 171–174. According to Bokman, the pianist Maria Karandashova, who participated in this performance, relayed this story to her students. Bokman, op. cit., note 26.

³⁸² Louis Blois, 'Shostakovich and the Ustvol'skaya Connection: A Textual Investigation', *The Music Review*, Vol. 52, No. 3, August (1991), pp. 218–224. Regrettably, as Shostakovich's letter has now been destroyed, the author has not had direct access to it.

³⁸³ Bagrenin, <<http://ustvol'skaya.org>> (accessed on 02/06/2014).

conventional position as Shostakovich's student, gradually assuming a place as his musical conscience, as it became clear that he held Ustvolskaya's talent and integrity in such high regard. By 1953, Shostakovich started inquiries as to Ustvolskaya's (Galya's) personal welfare in his private letters and began to send her scores of his unpublished work prior to their completion, including the abandoned work *The Gamblers*, (significantly asking for its return in 1974 in order to re-use it for his Viola Sonata)³⁸⁴ and Preludes and Fugues, in order to receive sound criticism and judgement.³⁸⁵ In a letter to Isaak Glikman (Leningrad theatre critic and historian) dated 28/08/1953, whilst in Moscow, Shostakovich asks:

I have a favour to ask of you: could you please find out where Galya Ustvolskaya is? Did she come back to Leningrad, and is she in good health? I have many things to discuss with her, and I have sent her many letters and telegrams. Knowing what an efficient person she is, I am rather concerned at the lack of response. If it is not too much trouble, please find out where she is and if she is well.³⁸⁶

Significantly, the affection of their personal relationship is conveyed through Shostakovich's manuscript *Satires on the Words of Sasha Chorny* (1960), which was presented to Ustvolskaya during the height of his infatuation, with the inscription 'To dear Galya Ustvolskaya from loving D. Shostakovich'³⁸⁷ (Illus. 4.1).

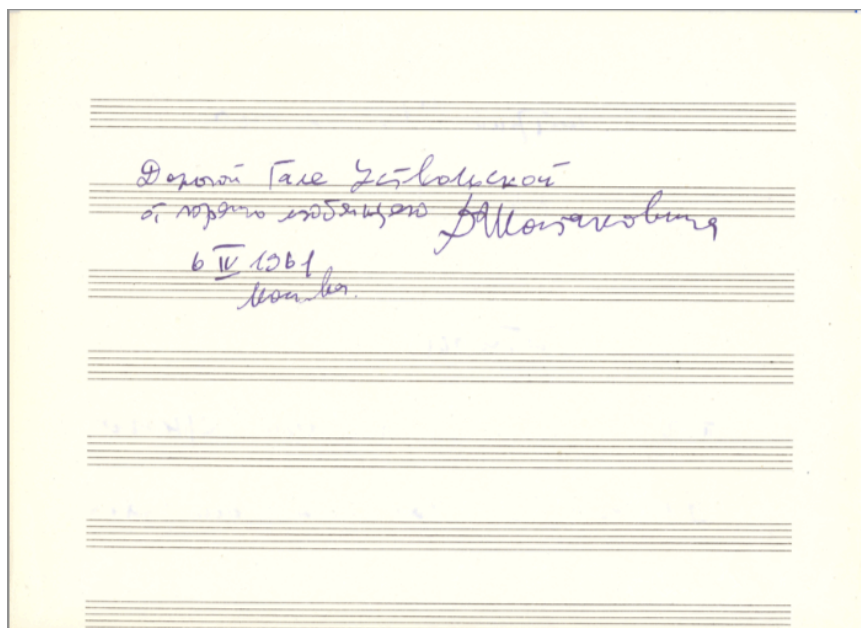
³⁸⁴ Elizabeth Wilson, *Shostakovich: A Life Remembered*, op. cit., p. 283.

³⁸⁵ Information received from the PSS, who now house this manuscript.

³⁸⁶ Isaak Glikman, trans. Anthony Phillips, *Story of a Friendship: The Letters of Dmitry Shostakovich to Isaak Glikman 1941–1975 with a Commentary by Isaak Glikman* (London: Faber and Faber, 1993), p. 49.

³⁸⁷ Laurel E. Fay, *Shostakovich: A Life* (Oxford: Oxford University Press), p. 286. The scores of *The Gamblers*, Preludes and Fugues, and *Satires* are all now housed in the PSS. These gift manuscripts were sold by Ustvolskaya to the PSS, severing all final links she may have had with Shostakovich.

Illus. 4.1: Manuscript Example: Dedication of Shostakovich's *Satires on the Words of Sasha Chorny*



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The relationship between Ustvolskaya and Shostakovich changed from the initial teacher/student affiliation to a strong personal connection for nearly fourteen years after her studentship. According to Mikhail Druskin, the relationship developed during her early years as a teacher at the Rimsky-Korsakov Music College. Mikhail Druskin resided in the apartment directly above the one habited by Ustvolskaya and her companion Balkashin: Shostakovich visited the apartment on regular occasions, along with his compositions for which he sought approval from Ustvolskaya.³⁸⁸ During these meetings, Balkashin was sent out for long walks: when questioned by Elizabeth Wilson as to the exact nature of the meetings, Mikhail Druskin simply said it was not possible to relay information concerning Shostakovich at this time as he 'knew too much' as a neighbour of Ustvolskaya.³⁸⁹ How exactly their romantic relationship was instigated and the exact nature of their relations,

³⁸⁸ Related to Dullaghan by Lydia Druskin, Mikhail's and Yakov's sister, June 1997. Dullaghan, op. cit., p. 6.

³⁸⁹ Conversation between Elizabeth Wilson and Mikhail Druskin. Elizabeth Wilson, *Shostakovich: A Life Remembered*, op. cit., p. 297.

remains a mystery. The ambiguity surrounding the nature of their relationship is exacerbated somewhat by Ustvol'skaya's contemporaries being extremely reluctant to discuss the issue, choosing to remain fiercely loyal to the private history of the two composers. However, Iosif Pustyl'nik³⁹⁰ (1905–1991) recalled Ustvol'skaya as a determined young woman who, during a train journey in the 1930s between Moscow and Leningrad, persuaded him to exchange tickets with her so she could be consigned, overnight, to the same train carriage as Shostakovich.³⁹¹ Whatever the origins of the fateful relationship, perhaps Ustvol'skaya herself best recalled the respect and admiration Shostakovich held for her during an interview with Khentova in 1977 (despite often refusing to give interviews to journalists or musicologists alike) recalling that he had told her 'I am a talent, but you are a phenomenon'.³⁹²

Shortly after the sudden death of Shostakovich's first wife Nina Vasilievna Varzar in 1954 (they had married in 1932), Shostakovich first proposed marriage to Ustvol'skaya.³⁹³ The official date of this proposal remains unknown, although Galina Shostakovich recalls her father addressing the prospect of marriage to Ustvol'skaya with her and her brother Maxim around this period.³⁹⁴ Shortly after Ustvol'skaya's rejection, Shostakovich met Margarita Kainova and embarked upon his brief and somewhat disastrous marriage to a woman he would later refer to as an 'absolute stranger',³⁹⁵ and divorce in 1959. In the meantime Ustvol'skaya had met and struck up a companionship with Balkashin, who unexpectedly died of an epileptic fit in 1960. Both single, it is entirely plausible that once again Shostakovich proposed marriage to Ustvol'skaya, who declined him.³⁹⁶

³⁹⁰ A Russian specialist in strict 'old' polyphony.

³⁹¹ Related to Ivashkin by Sergy Slonimsky in St Petersburg, June 2007, and recalled to the author by Ivashkin, London, July 2007.

³⁹² Khentova, op. cit., pp. 171–174.

³⁹³ Throughout his relationship with Nina, Shostakovich was known to have pursued other muses including Yelena Konstantinovskaya, a student to whom he sent forty-two declarations of love via letter and immortalised through his quotation of *Carmen* in his Fifth Symphony (Carmen was the married name of Konstantinovskaya). Elizabeth Wilson, *Shostakovich: A Life Remembered*, op. cit., pp. 153–154. Alexander Benditsky, *O pyatoy simfonii D. Shostakovicha [On the Fifth Symphony of D. Shostakovich]* (Nizhny Novgorod: Nizhegorodskaya Konservatorya, 2000).

³⁹⁴ Elizabeth Wilson, *Shostakovich: A Life Remembered*, op. cit., p. 297.

³⁹⁵ Mishra, op. cit., p. 210.

³⁹⁶ Note the date on the autograph of *Satires on the Words of Sasha Chorny* is 1961.

Many influential figures on the Soviet music scene have testified to the remarkable relationship between Ustvol'skaya and Shostakovich. Mstislav Rostropovich described Ustvol'skaya as one of Shostakovich's few 'faithful friends' continuing to observe that 'she [Ustvol'skaya] certainly regarded Shostakovich very highly and, indeed, there was a very 'tender' relationship between them'.³⁹⁷ Marina Sabinina recounts how Ustvol'skaya was one of three of Shostakovich's closest friends who celebrated the success of the premiere of his First Violin Concerto in the 'European' Hotel.³⁹⁸ Suslin even compared their 'intimate spiritual and artistic relationship' to that of Webern and Schoenberg.³⁹⁹

4.2: The Falling-out

Ustvol'skaya's position on Shostakovich changed dramatically after she was interviewed by Khentova in 1977. Indeed, by the time Elizabeth Wilson approached Ustvol'skaya for an interview in 1994 for her Shostakovich biography, Ustvol'skaya refused outright to participate, leading to Derks's ironically titled article '*Very Nearly an Interview*' — a brief, strained interview with Ustvol'skaya and Suslin, to appear later that year in *Tempo*.⁴⁰⁰ Ustvol'skaya's rhetoric towards Shostakovich and his music took on a significantly more negative slant. Bokman recounts how: 'Attempts to speak about Shostakovich with Galina Ivanovna were unsuccessful. It was not a "forbidden topic", but any question, remark or phrase, containing his name, was interrupted by a dismissive hand gesture and a phrase "Ah, this is not interesting" or "why are you interested in this?"'⁴⁰¹

Ustvol'skaya's public contempt towards Shostakovich continued to grow. The PSS holds special statements that Ustvol'skaya issued to her publisher Hans Sikorski, as her work was increasingly recognised in the West. In this letter, which represents her official viewpoint on the Shostakovich connection,

³⁹⁷ Elizabeth Wilson, *Shostakovich: A Life Remembered*, op. cit., p. 249.

³⁹⁸ Elizabeth Wilson, *ibid.*, p. 318.

³⁹⁹ Suslin, 'The Music of Spiritual Independence', op. cit., p. 24.

⁴⁰⁰ Derks, op. cit., pp. 31–33.

⁴⁰¹ Bokman, op. cit., p. 41.

Ustvol'skaya displays her rage towards him, denying any influence he may have had on her and deprecating both his professional and personal integrity: a text that has provoked international fascination. She wrote:

Then, as now, I determinedly reject his [Shostakovich's] music, and unfortunately his personality only intensified this negative attitude ... One thing remains as clear as day: a seemingly eminent figure such as Shostakovich, to me, is not eminent at all, on the contrary, he controlled my life and killed my best feelings.⁴⁰²

Moreover, Ustvol'skaya refused to talk about her personal relationship with Shostakovich, forbidding her loyal circle to do the same and publicly denouncing the music of her former composition teacher, even signing Suslin's article objecting to the notion that Shostakovich's Fifth Symphony had any lasting musical significance.⁴⁰³ On July 15th 1996, Ustvol'skaya wrote an ardent letter to the PSS, strongly reinforcing Suslin's words (Fig. 4.2).

Fig. 4.2: Letter transcription: Letter 73, 15th July 1996, held in the Paul Sacher Stiftung, Basel. Accessed by the author, October 2008

At one time I transferred to the possession of your archives a letter written to me by the composer Viktor Suslin concerning D. D. Shostakovich. I fully agreed with the views stated in the letter and subscribed to every word in it. This letter was written in Russian. So, to avoid any misunderstanding, I'm sending you the EXACT German translation of the letter, and again I subscribe to every word of it.

Respectfully Yours,
Galina Ustvol'skaya

Derks further addressed this subject with Ustvol'skaya and Suslin during the aforementioned interview in 1995:

⁴⁰² Letter to Suslin, 14/01/1990, held at the PSS and accessed by the author November 2008.

⁴⁰³ 'I, Galina Ustvol'skaya completely and entirely agree with this article by Suslin'. Ustvol'skaya, letter dated July 15th 1996, St Petersburg, held at PSS, and accessed by the author 31/10/2010.

T[hea]. D[erks].: How could she [Ustvol'skaya] bear to have a teacher, who apparently repelled her?

Ustvol'skaya springs up and says: *Ich Sage Nichts!* Everything she already had to say on the subject, is already in her letter. Suslin adds: 'In the fifties, Shostakovich proposed to marry her, but she refused him. What happened then – let's leave that be, but Shostakovich definitely wasn't an easy person. Moreover it took Galina almost superhuman strength to avoid his influence: she is the only one of Shostakovich's pupils who did not become his clone, but succeeded in developing a language completely her own. This must have been a tremendous effort of will.

Furthermore, Michael Mishra, in *A Shostakovich Companion*, summarises what he believes to be the differences between the two composers' approaches to official demands:

Unlike some composers, Shostakovich's film scores kept stylistic pace with his concert works. Ustvol'skaya, for example, drained off her own personality to produce film scores in a wholly acceptable soviet style from which she could completely disassociate herself.⁴⁰⁴

More recently, during her interview with Gladkova in 1998, Ustvol'skaya remembered back to those times when she was Shostakovich's pupil and was equally as disparaging about her former teacher:

Dmitri Dmitriyevich invited me to concerts and rehearsals. I could not refuse, of course. Sometimes I stood for the entire concert because there were as many people in his concerts in the great Hall of the Philharmonic as herrings in a barrel. I endured these concerts with great difficulty because the music was grating on the ears, and my soul ached. I wanted to leave, but had to shake hands with Shostakovich and Mravinsky after the concert. Shostakovich's music always left me depressed. How the music [sic] such as this was called and still is called genius? It dims over time. One episode says a lot. Once around 1939 or 40, Shostakovich came to me and told me that he had almost finished his Seventh Symphony. A few finishing touches were all that remained, and he mentioned that he did not know whether it should be called 'Lenin' or 'Leninskaya'.⁴⁰⁵

Considering Ustvol'skaya's comparable observation of official control, Shostakovich's compromise with the party line may only provide a partial

⁴⁰⁴ Mishra, op. cit., p. 464.

⁴⁰⁵ Ustvol'skaya, <<http://ustvol'skaya.org/eng/>> (accessed on 17/02/2015).

solution to the conundrum surrounding their falling-out, as it does not adequately justify what Elizabeth Wilson has identified as such great ‘disloyalty’. Perhaps the intense bitterness on Ustvol’skaya’s part was the result of a personal feud brought on by the potency of the romantic feelings that once existed (although Ustvol’skaya assertively challenged this as an explanation). Shostakovich’s sudden and unexpected marriage to Margarita Kainova in 1956 (immediately after his first marriage proposal to Ustvol’skaya) implied a certain impulsive approach to his romantic gestures that, according to Mishra, may well suggest that it was actually Ustvol’skaya who was the rejected party. The falling-out certainly was not without its pain: Bokman recalls a more sensitive and personal reaction by Ustvol’skaya when he, following his graduation, returned to his former composition teacher and asked her to listen to his music and offer advice. Ustvol’skaya answered with an ironic question: ‘And who should I show mine to? You see, even Dmitri Dmitrievich is no longer a judge of it’.⁴⁰⁶ Although the loss of romantic feelings might offer an explanation if the situation is judged by today’s Western standards it cannot lead to any firm conclusions. Indeed in this cultural context, it was widely accepted that a professional man, with children, would need the help and support a wife could lend, so it was only natural for Shostakovich to look for a spouse

A further factor that may have magnified Ustvol’skaya’s ill-feelings is revealed by Lydia Druskin. This concerned Shostakovich’s stipulation of the return of his gift manuscript *The Gamblers* in 1974. According to Lydia Druskin, this was the act that destroyed an already rocky relationship.⁴⁰⁷

The gift manuscripts, and all that they symbolise, have clearly been an area of difficulty for both the Ustvol’skaya and the Shostakovich camps. Ivashkin’s assertions in a discussion at the Ustvol’skaya Symposium, Amsterdam in 2011 elicited a strong reaction from Bagrenin on behalf of his late wife. Ivashkin stated:

⁴⁰⁶ Bokman, op. cit., p. 41.

⁴⁰⁷ Related to Dullaghan by Lydia Druskin, June 1997. Dullaghan, op. cit., p. 7.

It is well known that Ustvolskaya kept a number of Shostakovich's unpublished scores, including 'The Gamblers', until a very late [stage]...And the second document was mentioned to me by Irina Antonovna Shostakovich who actually was the only person who read a collection of the letters from Ustvolskaya to Shostakovich, which she discovered after Shostakovich's death in his flat. And she sent these letters back to Ustvolskaya, of course, because Irina Antonovna said they were so personal and so passionate that she felt Ustvolskaya should have them. And, of course, Ustvolskaya burned them.⁴⁰⁸

Bagrenin's response to Ivashkin's comments has been typically uncompromising. He insists that Ustvolskaya had only ever kept two scores from Shostakovich: *The Gamblers* and *From Jewish Poetry*. Otherwise, the only other score in her possession that related to Shostakovich was Stravinsky's *Symphony of Psalms* (1930), that bore an inscription from Shostakovich, dated March 18th 1955. Bagrenin refuses to accept the existence of any other letters sent to Ustvolskaya from the Shostakovich estate since 1964, with the exception of those transcribed in Fig. 4.3 and Fig. 4.4.⁴⁰⁹

⁴⁰⁸ A video of this discussion can be found at: *Oestvolskaja Symposium 27 mei 2011: forum discussion* <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=galuBAvs2IE>> (accessed on 19/02/2015). Ivashkin's comments can be found at 23: 39.

⁴⁰⁹ Bagrenin, *Precision* <<http://ustvolskaya.org/eng/>> (accessed on 17/02/2015).

Fig. 4.3: Transcription of letter from I. Shostakovich to Ustvol'skaya

28th of [sic] May 2000, Moscow

Dear Galina Ivanovna,

After reading your negative judgments about my late husband and his music, I appeal to you to pass on to our family, if this is acceptable to you, Shostakovich's manuscripts, which apparently are in your possession. This is the Fifth Quartet, Preludes and Fugues, Pushkin Monologues, the cycle 'From Jewish Folk Poetry', and Satires for poetry of Sasha Cherny.

I can support my request by the fact that, at the request of Dmitri Dmitriyevich, I, in due time and in response to your demand, immediately found and sent you your manuscripts, and, after my husband's death I returned to you, on my own initiative, your letter to him.

I think that a similar action on your part may make your life easier in some respects, including the material aspect. Time has its own requirements, and one must hurry. It would be very unpleasant if these manuscripts, lovingly presented to you at the time, and which are without significance to you, were to get into unclean hands and become the subject of speculation, or a means of profit.

Please be so kind as to tell me your decision. In early July I propose to be in Leningrad for a few days.

I. Shostakovich

Fig. 4.4: Transcription of letter from Ustvol'skaya to I. Shostakovich in reply

Dear Irina Antonovna!

Thank you for your offer to ease my life. Unfortunately, it is too late: I transferred all the manuscripts I had to the Paul Sacher Foundation in Basel. Whether these hands are 'clean' or 'unclean' may be a matter of opinion. I can only say these hands contain all the manuscripts of Stravinsky, Bartók, Messiaen, Webern.

With respect,
Galina Ustvol'skaya
16.06.2000
St Petersburg

Both Ustvol'skaya's reply and Bagrenin's discussion of this matter are equally scathing. Here he addresses the issue of the 'burned letters' to which Ivashkin referred:

Ustvol'skaya never understood what letters Irina Antonovna referred to in this single letter of 2000. I think that it was a fantasy of old age. In 1965, Galina Ivanovna brought to the kitchen's garbage chute two thick bundles of letters tied with strings, a pack of manuscripts of her works and demanded that I tear it all to pieces and throw it in the garbage chute. I refused, saying that she had better do it herself, to which she replied that she «did not want to get her hands dirty». The letters were from Shostakovich. These I tore and threw down first. Galina Ivanovna stood by and oversaw the process. When she went to an unexpected phone call, I was able to hide away a pile of scores. It was turned out to be Octet and Trio [sic]. So, I'm the saviour of these works. As for the **confident assertion** of Mr. Ivashkin that Ustvol'skaya burned the letters, one may presume that Mr. Ivashkin was near Ustvol'skaya during this 'auto-da-fé',⁴¹⁰

Bagrenin's website continues Ustvol'skaya's denunciation of her former composition teacher loyally. An entire section is devoted to other musical professionals' critical remarks about Shostakovich, as if to give credit to Ustvol'skaya's ideas (these include interviews and writings by Suslin, Edison Denisov (underground Soviet composer, 1929–1996), Joseph Brodsky (poet/essayist, 1940–1996), Pierre Boulez (b. 1925), Esa-Pekka Salonen (Finnish composer/conductor b. 1958), Robin Holloway (English composer/musicologist, b. 1943)).⁴¹¹

Perhaps Ustvol'skaya's harsh and public rejection of Shostakovich was not as absolute as her public persona insisted: Ustvol'skaya's difficult character has, after all, been documented widely, even by Shostakovich before their relationship fell apart. Referring to her uncompromising character, Shostakovich wrote in a letter to Glikman: 'I don't think that Ustvol'skaya will

⁴¹⁰ Bagrenin, *Precision* <<http://ustvol'skaya.org/eng/>> (accessed on 19/02/2015).

⁴¹¹ Bagrenin's version of events, however, pays no attention to the suggestion made by Ivashkin to the author that Ustvol'skaya preserved the manuscript of Shostakovich's notorious Fourth Symphony for well over twenty years, following the turbulent events that rocked his career. If indeed this was the case, this compassionate act on the part of Ustvol'skaya – which continued well into the 1970s – clearly contradicts her public message of disdain towards Shostakovich and this act of collegiality and friendship would certainly convey a softer side to Ustvol'skaya's feelings. The author is yet to find evidence to substantiate this claim, but it will be the subject of future research. In conversation with Ivashkin, London, November 2009.

be able to give the director of the film what he needs, although she does need to earn some money.⁴¹² Furthermore, Gladkova asserts: ‘In her life, Ustvolskaya did not know how to ‘please’ anyone and, frankly, never wished to do so.’⁴¹³ Ustvolskaya was often unwilling to cooperate with any other musicians. Robert Aitken, for example, suggested to Ustvolskaya that she could travel to Canada in order to conduct the New Music Concerts’ (NMC) portrait concert devoted to her work. This was met with the usual resistance. ‘In a few instances, such as this evening’s concert’, Aitken writes in the programme, ‘the composers cannot or do not want to travel. In Ustvolskaya’s case, in order to present a portrait, we asked her please to give us the name of someone who may have been influenced by her or whom she felt needed more exposure. Ustvolskaya’s response was that there is no composer who has ever influenced her, and there is no composer whom she has ever influenced.’⁴¹⁴

Ustvolskaya’s nervous disposition can be traced back to events in her childhood when she always sought solitude, refusing to play with other children and even hiding under the piano to shun invitations to parties.⁴¹⁵ Contemporaries of Ustvolskaya remember her as shy and anxious in nature, even in her years as a student. Indeed as a post-graduate student, a report written by V. Voloshino (head of composition) alludes to her ‘poor health’; her final report, wholly recommends Ustvolskaya for the teaching post at the Rimsky-Korsakov Music College, yet concurrently relays information regarding a sick individual with an ‘unstable nervous system.’⁴¹⁶

It is as a consequence that, according to Gladkova’s biography, Ustvolskaya felt drawn to nature, peace and stillness where she could achieve isolation from sound, conversation and company, talking to God and accomplishing oneness with his creation.⁴¹⁷ In contrast, Banevich later presented to Dullaghan the idea of Ustvolskaya having a more compound temperament and a two-fold disposition: at times ‘acting like a *prima donna* at others, sitting huddled in a corner, unwilling to acknowledge applause.

⁴¹² Glikman op. cit., p. 274.

⁴¹³ Gladkova, op. cit., p. 42.

⁴¹⁴ Robert Aitken, *Premieres Personalities Portraits 1994–95 Season*, Concert programme held in the PSS.

⁴¹⁵ Gladkova, op. cit., p. 27.

⁴¹⁶ Dullaghan, op. cit., p. 4.

⁴¹⁷ Gladkova, op. cit., p. 27.

However, she is constantly fastidious about performers, performances and programmes, and has been known to withdraw a work because of the unsuitability of the programme as a whole.⁴¹⁸ In 1971, Ustvol'skaya commenced a twenty-year professional relationship with Malov when he embarked on the editing, recording and performing of many of her compositions (including performing the premieres of the Grand Duet, Compositions Nos. 2 and 3 and Symphony No. 5). However, despite Malov's wife, Klara, stating that it was not out of the ordinary for Ustvol'skaya to telephone the Malov home five or six times a day,⁴¹⁹ there is absolutely no mention of him in her official biography. This issue is addressed by Lee:

Ustvol'skaya rationalized this oversight by the fact that Malov plays her music 'badly' and that she now officially supports the pianists Reinbert de Leeuw and Frank Denyer as proper interpreters of her music. The truth of the omission is more likely due to the souring of the relationship several years ago, and it was probably understood by the biographer that he not be mentioned.⁴²⁰

Her notorious public disputes with many leading musical figures are certainly testament to the more difficult side of her character. Nevertheless, whatever the motives behind the falling-out of Ustvol'skaya and Shostakovich, it was to have a significant effect upon both composers' musical output that is worthy of examination.

4.3: Ustvol'skaya's Influence on Shostakovich

Sporadically, the influence of Shostakovich's most favoured pupils was to have a profound impact upon his own compositions. Mishra singles out the *Six Poems of Marina Tsvetayeva* (1973) as having been influenced by Tishchenko's *Three Tsvetayeva Songs* (1979); *From Jewish Folk Poetry* (1948) following Weinberg's *Jewish Songs* (1943–1944); Shostakovich's first

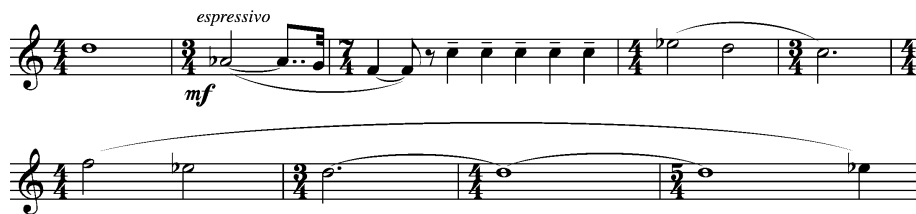
⁴¹⁸ Banevich, related to Dullaghan in June 1997. Dullaghan, op. cit., p. 11.

⁴¹⁹ Related to Dullaghan by Klara Malova, June 1996. Dullaghan, *ibid.*.

⁴²⁰ Marian Lee, *IREX Research Report* <<http://www.irex.org/programs/iaro/research/lee.pdf>> (accessed on 04/11/2007).

attempts at twelve-tone writing (e.g. Twelfth String Quartet, 1968) after Levitin's Suite for Cello and Chamber Orchestra (1966) and Boris Tchaikovsky's *Partita* (1966), as fine examples of Shostakovich taking conceptual inspiration for his own work.⁴²¹ No work demonstrates, however, such a concrete influence from one of his students quite so clearly as his Fifth String Quartet (1952), where he directly makes use of the musical material from Ustvolskaya's Trio for Clarinet, Violin and Piano.⁴²²

Ex. 4.5: Figure 31, Galina Ustvolskaya's Trio



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Famously, as a further homage to Ustvolskaya, Shostakovich used the same theme again more than twenty years later in his *Suite on Verses of Michelangelo Buonarroti*, op.145. As these two works straddle the composers' notorious falling-out, the contrasting ways in which the theme is presented is entirely significant. However, upon closer examination, the musical quotation in question demands further attention than it has received thus far in terms of musicological commentary. The recent discovery of Shostakovich's unfinished *Symphonic Fragment* of 1945 (which was, significantly, completed four years prior to the completion of Ustvolskaya's Trio) also includes remarkably similar musical material to both of these works, and this theme also features in the

⁴²¹ Mishra, op. cit., p. 484.

⁴²² Shostakovich's quotation of the theme from Ustvolskaya's Trio has been subject to extensive commentary. For accounts of the treatment of the theme in Shostakovich see: Elizabeth Wilson, *Shostakovich: A Life Remembered*, op. cit., p. 294, Mishra, op. cit., pp. 194–197, and Blois, op. cit., pp. 218–224.

opening of the fourth song of his 1961 song cycle *Satires on the Words of Sasha Chorny*.

The appearance of the second subject of the final movement of Ustvolskaya's Trio for Violin, Clarinet and Piano in Shostakovich's Fifth String Quartet, has probably given rise to more musicological commentary than any other of Ustvolskaya's works, not least because of the significant manner in which Shostakovich represents the same theme throughout his own quartet. The initial appearance is in the first movement, which – although it opens with rhythmical belligerence, oscillating between short, faltering motifs and a waltz-like subject – is soon expanded into an impassioned and lengthy development. The tension between these ideas mounts to a climactic skirmish, culminating in a declamation of Ustvolskaya's theme, as if the theme itself provides respite to the crescendoing tumult: the violins marked *fff* and *espressivo* (figure 29, Ex. 4.6). To Blois, Shostakovich's decision was undeniably autobiographical: Ustvolskaya 'provide[d] the [spiritual] grace that transcends the irreconcilable. The symbolism of Ustvolskaya's bringing comfort to a troubled Shostakovich is difficult to ignore'.⁴²³

⁴²³ Blois, *ibid.*, p. 219.

Ex. 4.6: Dmitri Shostakovich, String Quartet No. 5, figure 29

The image displays a musical score for a string quartet, specifically Figure 29 from Dmitri Shostakovich's String Quartet No. 5. The score is arranged in two systems. The first system includes parts for Violin 1, Violin 2, Viola, and Cello. Each part begins with a *fff espressivo* marking. The time signature is 3/4, and the key signature has one flat. The second system includes parts for Violin 1, Violin 2, Viola, and Cello. The time signature changes to 2/4. The notation includes various musical symbols such as notes, rests, and dynamic markings.

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Ustvol'skaya's theme also occupies the final seventy-one bars of the same movement, this time emerging as distant contemplation in the solo first violin, rising serenely above a homophonic accompaniment in duple metre in the remaining instrumental lines. This theme, never rising above its *piano*, *espressivo* marking modulates sequentially, until it comes to rest languorously on a high F for the final twenty-six bars, bridging the gap to the second movement.

In stark contrast, the appropriated theme manifests itself yet again at the climactic point of the final movement (figure 110) in a harmonised violin duet above stentorian viola and cello parts, this time – albeit a brief appearance of only six bars – marked *fortissimo espressivo*, with accented articulation

markings on each new attack. Mishra draws attention to musicologist Arkady Klimovitsky whose publication suggests that these chords spell out ‘Mi—tyen—ka’, a diminutive of Dmitri by which Shostakovich was known (aside from the more commonly used ‘Mitya’), but also alludes to the mixed reception this conjecture has received.⁴²⁴ Figure 115 (*Meno Mosso*) sees the second violin, viola and cello drop out to leave an exposed and lingering solo violin for the final appearance of the Ustvolskaya theme before the return of a mournful first subject that, according to Elizabeth Wilson, ‘creates the impression of nostalgic regret, reminiscent of a reluctant farewell’.⁴²⁵

Elizabeth Wilson continues by drawing attention to a further quotation that materialises in the quartet: the viola motif in the second bar of the first movement – and an overriding feature of the first movement in its entirety – derives from a theme in Ustvolskaya’s Piano Sonata No. 1.⁴²⁶ This motif effectively doubles up as an anagram of Shostakovich’s famous DSCH motif and, consequently, incessantly entwines the musical representations of the composers throughout the piece. In bar eight of the same movement, the notes G and A are added so as to intertwine glaringly both the composers’ names (DSCH and GALina) – this consequently develops into a characteristic of the movement in its entirety.⁴²⁷

When the Trio theme resurfaces in *Suite on Verses of Michelangelo Buonarroti* nearly twenty-five years later, Ustvolskaya’s theme is realised in the ninth song ‘*Noch*’ (Night), but this time as the *principal* theme. Every note is centred upon her theme, making her the cornerstone of the activity (Ex. 4.7).

⁴²⁴ Mishra, op. cit., p. 196.

⁴²⁵ Elizabeth Wilson, *Shostakovich: A Life Remembered*, op. cit., p. 294.

⁴²⁶ Elizabeth Wilson, *ibid.*, p. 294.

⁴²⁷ Elizabeth Wilson, *Through the Looking Glass: Reflections on aspects of symbolism in Shostakovich’s Music*, paper delivered at Shostakovich 100, Queen Elizabeth Hall, London, 26/09/2006.

perhaps even the broken character of one that Shostakovich once held in such high regard. The text of the entire cycle contains autobiographical pertinence, as if Shostakovich was prophesying his own death amidst the gradual decline of his health. It is as if the text of this particular song contains a final heartfelt sentiment directed towards Ustvol'skaya.

Fig. 4.8: Lyrics to *Noch*

The night, which saw you so sweetly sleeping,
Was hewn by an angel out of this rock;
Being asleep, yet it is alive:
Wake it up, if you do not believe it, and it will talk to you.

Dear is sleep to me, but dearer is it to be a stone.
While ruin and shame persist:
No to see, not to hear, would be a happy fate;
So wake me not, oh, speak only softly.

Further to this, the profound musical connection once more appears in the opening vocal line of the fourth song *Nyedorazumyeniye* ('A Misunderstanding') of *Satires on the Words of Sasha Chorny* as a reflection of the two composers' private lives. The appearance of the Trio theme shows itself once more to be adaptable to yet another of Shostakovich's musical contexts (Ex. 4.9). The text of this fourth poem examines the relationship between a young man (the 'rake') and a woman (the 'poetess') to whom the rake embarks upon a visit. The text utilised here is personal and intimate: Chorny presents a highly sexualised meeting, where the poetess almost teases the rake by encouraging his attention (Fig. 4.10).

Ex. 4.9: Opening of No. 4 *Nyedorazumyeniye* from *Satires on the Words of Sasha Chorny*, bars 9–12

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Fig. 4.10: Lyrics of *Nyedorazumyeniye*

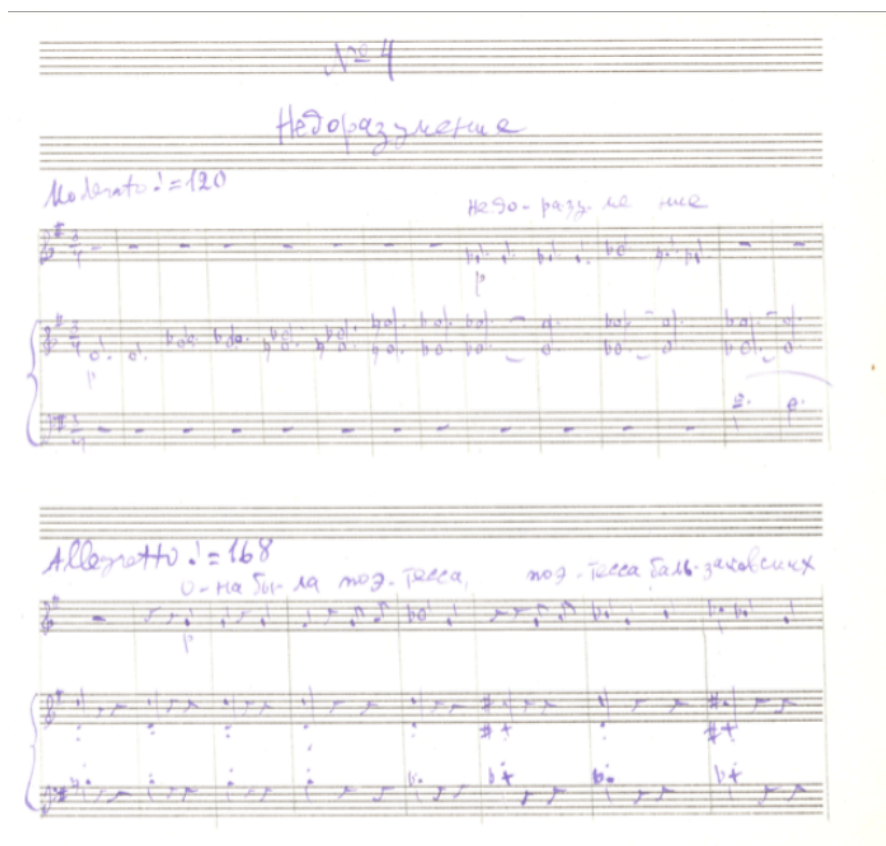
She was a Poetess,
a poetess from Balzac's time,
And he was just a rake,
with dark, curly hair.
The rake came to visit the poetess;
and in the semi-darkness the perfume was wafting
over the sofa, as at solemn mass.

The poetess intoned her verses in a nasal twang:
'Oh, try with your burning caresses
to arouse my sleeping passion,
to the wiggling of my hips beneath the crimson garter
do not be afraid to press your lips!

I am as fresh as a flower ...
Oh let us join together our tired bodies.'
This is what happened next:
Oh curly, dark-haired young man blushed,
he blushed, but recovered quickly
and thought: well, well!
It isn't the speech of a minister
Or mere words needed here, but actions.
With the unrestrained strength of a Centaur
he embraced the poetess,
but gave an offensive scream:
'Mavra, Mavra, Mavra, Mavra!'
The torment froze.
'Forgive me!' and he jumped up, 'but you ...'
But her eyes were cold and haughty.
'You dared to insult a lady,
and approach her with embraces like a lackey!
I am the noble Mavra!'
So the guest left, affrighted,
and in the hall with anxious glances
he searched high and low for his stick.
With a face as white as chalk
this dark, curly-haired young man went down the stairs.

He did not understand this new poetry,
and the poetess from Balzac's time.

Illus. 4.11: Manuscript Example, Opening of No. 4, *Nyedorazumyeniye* from *Satires on the Words of Sasha Chorny*



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The ‘misunderstanding’ is a proposition from the rake to the poetess. The rake wrongly believes the proposition to have been invited, and his advances are rejected. He consequently leaves, for the poetess and her poetry are untouchable – a scenario that seems to be a fair reflection of the biography of both composers (for the manuscript example of the opening of this song, see Illus. 4.11). Ustvolskaya and Shostakovich, both single in 1961 following the unexpected death of Ustvolskaya’s romantic companion Balkashin in the composers’ resort in Repino⁴²⁹ and Shostakovich’s divorce, rekindled their relationship at around the time of the composition of this cycle and it is more than possible that, as before, they continued their private meetings in Ustvolskaya’s apartment. A letter from Shostakovich to Glikman in November

⁴²⁹ Khentova, op. cit., pp. 154–155.

1960, also records the devastating event of Balkashin's death. In this letter, Shostakovich expresses that he does not know the exact nature of Ustvol'skaya's relationship with Balkashin, which contradicts Khentova's description of Balkashin as Ustvol'skaya's 'husband'. Shostakovich wrote: 'Galya will, I am sure be devastated by his death. And I am sure that now she really loves him. She loved him while he was alive but would not marry him.'⁴³⁰

As has been discussed, it has been widely suggested that, at this time, Shostakovich once again proposed marriage to Ustvol'skaya, who once more declined.⁴³¹ *Satires on the Words of Sasha Chorny* was one of the 'gift scores' Shostakovich bestowed on Ustvol'skaya and – in light of the private musical exchange that spanned decades – it is not too difficult to imagine a concealed disclosure between them, as the only word set to this theme is the eponymous *Nyedorazumyeniye* ['A Misunderstanding'] itself. As Ustvol'skaya refused Shostakovich's romantic advances and began the process of distancing herself from him as man and as musician, perhaps the final line of the song summarises this most aptly: 'He did not understand this new poetry/ and the poetess from Balzac's time'.⁴³² Shostakovich's romantic attentions were diverted elsewhere, and he married Irina Antonovna Supinskaya (b. 1934) one year later, in 1962.

Although thus far, it has historically been treated as fact that the origins of this theme were in Ustvol'skaya's Trio, a curiosity has recently been revealed as the result of Olga Digonskaya's (archivist at the Shostakovich collection in Moscow) unearthing of an unpublished, abandoned, symphonic sketch of Shostakovich's Ninth Symphony.⁴³³ This sketch was discovered in December 2003 and recorded and conducted by Mark Fitz-Gerald for release in 2009. It is entirely possible that Shostakovich had played this unpublished fragment to Ustvol'skaya, as other musicians (including student Evgeny Makarov)

⁴³⁰ Glikman, op. cit., p. 274.

⁴³¹ Note the date of the inscription on the autograph of *Satires on the Words of Sasha Chorny* as 1961.

⁴³² Translation taken from CD Liner notes: *Galina Vishnevskaya, Shostakovich: Seven Romances on Verses by Alexander Blok, Satires, Lady Macbeth of Mtsensk (Act I, Scene 3)* EMI Classics 5 62829 2, 1976.

⁴³³ Olga Digonskaya, CD liner notes: *Girl Friends / Rule, Britannia / Salute to Spain*, Polish Radio Symphony, Fitz-Gerald, Naxos, 8.572138, 2009.

remember him playing them the beginning of this version.⁴³⁴ Manashir Yakubov (b. 1926: the editor of the Shostakovich fragment in question) has confirmed that it was entirely feasible that Shostakovich had played this to Ustvolskaya, as it is widely known (from her memoirs) that Shostakovich had played it to Tatiana Nikolayeva (pianist 1924–1993).⁴³⁵ Digonskaya also confirms this possibility.⁴³⁶ Yakubov has also asserted that Shostakovich's fragment was, in fact, rather a sketch for his Tenth Symphony – not his Ninth – and, more significantly, that material from this sketch was also used in the unpublished movement of Shostakovich's Fifth String Quartet, along with the unfinished Violin Sonata of 1945. The second theme of this abandoned version was also used in a Violin Sonata in G minor, which Shostakovich began the same year, and the very same extract was yet again seized upon for his Tenth Symphony, Op. 93 (1953) as the second theme of the first movement. In a modest footnote to the CD liner notes of the first recording of this piece, Fanning presents a connection between this newly discovered draft and Ustvolskaya's Trio theme, rendering it thereby *impossible* that Shostakovich had paid homage to his pupil through its inclusion as broadly deduced thus far.⁴³⁷ Indeed, although the theme does not appear in exactly the same way as it does in Ustvolskaya's Trio, there are striking musical similarities: a repeated note motif and downward third interval penetrates this fragment dominantly throughout (Ex. 4.12 and 4.13).

⁴³⁴ Digonskaya, *ibid.*.

⁴³⁵ Yakubov in conversation with Ivashkin in September 2009, and relayed to author by Ivashkin via e-mail 02/09/2009.

⁴³⁶ Digonskaya, via e-mail, translated and received via Alexander Ivashkin, 02/11/2009.

⁴³⁷ David Fanning, CD liner notes: *Girl Friends / Rule, Britannia / Salute to Spain*, Polish Radio Symphony, Fitz-Gerald, Naxos, 8.572138, 2009.

Ex. 4.12: Shostakovich's *Symphonic Fragment* (1945), two bars before figure 5

The musical score is arranged in two systems. The first system includes the woodwinds and percussion:

- Piccolo: Treble clef, 4/4 time, dynamic *fff*.
- Flute: Treble clef, 4/4 time, dynamic *fff*.
- Oboe: Treble clef, 4/4 time, dynamic *fff*.
- Oboe: Treble clef, 4/4 time, dynamic *fff*.
- Cor Anglais: Treble clef, 4/4 time, dynamic *fff*.
- Clarinet in Bb: Treble clef, 4/4 time, dynamic *fff*.
- Clarinet in Bb: Treble clef, 4/4 time, dynamic *fff*.
- Bassoon: Bass clef, 4/4 time, dynamic *fff*.
- Trumpet in C: Treble clef, 4/4 time.
- Trombone: Bass clef, 4/4 time.
- Trombone: Bass clef, 4/4 time.
- Timpani: Bass clef, 4/4 time.

The second system includes the strings:

- Violin I: Treble clef, 4/4 time.
- Violin II: Treble clef, 4/4 time.
- Viola: Alto clef, 4/4 time.
- Violoncello: Bass clef, 4/4 time.
- Double Bass: Bass clef, 4/4 time.

The score shows two measures of music. The first measure is marked *fff* and features a melodic line in the woodwinds. The second measure continues the melodic line and includes a dynamic marking *>* (accent) over the woodwinds. The key signature has two flats (Bb and Eb).

Ex. 4.13: Shostakovich's *Symphonic Fragment* (1945), three bars before figure 6

The musical score is arranged in a system of 14 staves. The instruments are listed on the left: Piccolo, Flute, Oboe, Oboe, Cor Anglais, Clarinet in Eb, Bassoon, Contrabassoon, Trumpet in C, Violin I, Violin II, Viola, Violoncello, and Double Bass. The key signature is B-flat major (two flats) and the time signature is 4/4. The woodwind and string parts play a rhythmic pattern of quarter notes. The brass and some string parts play a falling minor third motif in the third bar.

The falling minor third motif first appears in the third bar of the fragment in the trumpets and strings, and recurs throughout the piece, no more dominantly than shortly before figure 5 where, this time, it is proclaimed in unison by the entire orchestra, and once more returns again in the seventh bar of figure 13.

However, this is not all: the insistent, repeated note motif, also a characteristic of Ustvol'skaya's Trio theme, is dominant throughout the fragment and nowhere more so than in the wind and strings as a bridge in to figure 6. It would seem conclusive, therefore, that contrary to popular acceptance, Ustvol'skaya may have actually taken the melody from Shostakovich and he, in turn, used the theme in the works as previously demonstrated.

These findings compound the significance of this theme increasingly, as we end up with a private exchange of citations between the two composers, spanning several decades (Table 4.14). However, aside from these direct quotations that so palpably convey a musical interchange, there are numerous other examples of the *stylistic* influence that Ustvol'skaya was to have on Shostakovich. To examine this further, we need look no further than Shostakovich's Thirteenth String Quartet.

Table 4.14: Table showing the citation exchange of the 'Trio theme'

D.S	G.U.	D.S.	D.S.	D.S.
1946	1949	1952	1961	1974
Unused Symponic Fragment	Trio	Fifth String Quartet	<i>Satires</i>	<i>Suite on Verses of Michelangelo Buonarroti</i>
Student/Teacher	Colleagues/Lovers?	Height of Personal Relationship/1 st Proposal	Possible rekindling of Relationship/2 nd Proposal?/Beginnings of falling-out?	Broken Relationship
Original Theme/ Triumphant/ Energetic	Lyrical/ Energetic/ Occupies entire final movement	Youthful/ Empassioned/ Developed at length	Melancholic/ Set to the word 'Misunderstandings'/ Brief appearance	Principal theme/ Mournful/ Pathetic

Although his intentional implementation of dodecaphony (twelve-tone row, figure 20, bar 4) is a far cry from any of Ustvolskaya's compositional approaches, the modernist gestures that saturate this work resonate entirely with her progressive musical language. The same quartet demands percussive pizzicatos, marked *fortissimo*, indicative of Shostakovich's penchant for this timbre in his later works and his personal exhortations to encourage his performers to execute his pizzicato markings louder than directed in the score (Ustvolskaya's similar predilection for exaggerated dynamic markings is, of course, always marked deliberately in the score). Shostakovich was to take full advantage of the versatility of the instruments in his Thirteenth Quartet by directing the viola (figure 22) to strike rhythmically the wooden body of the instrument with the bow, resulting in the quartet's own percussive resonances. Fanning suggests that Shostakovich's timbral and instrumental experiments were indeed wholly indebted to the instrumentation commanded by Ustvolskaya in her Violin and Piano Sonata, where the violinist is directed to strike the belly of the instrument with the end of the bow,⁴³⁸ an effect that was taken to new heights by the early 1970s, when Ustvolskaya scored a part for a wooden box to be struck with wooden mallets in her Composition No. 2 – *Dies Irae*. Indeed, the dark tragedy that saturates many of Shostakovich's later works and that parallel the composer's failing health and preoccupation with his own death, are darkly reminiscent of Ustvolskaya's apocalyptic life view.

4.4: Shostakovich's influence on Ustvolskaya

Ustvolskaya's earliest works of the 1940s and 1950s – Trio, Piano Concerto for Piano, Strings and Timpani, Octet – often feature an elegant lyricism that is rarely seen in her mature style. Yet even in these early works, Ustvolskaya's later proclivity for short, aggressive motifs and repetitive hammering that characterise her Symphonies and Compositions appear. For example, the coda of the otherwise graceful Trio descends into insubordinate repetitive piano

⁴³⁸ Fanning, 'Shostakovich and his Pupils', op. cit., p. 297.

gestures. Likewise, the ending of her first catalogued work, Piano Concerto, consists of an extended coda of repeated, belligerent rhythmic motifs in a somewhat anachronistic style. Yet it is to the work of these early decades that one must look to see most clearly the influence Shostakovich had upon her compositional style before her own individual voice was fully established: this was when he was her teacher and, resultantly, where his influence is most tangible. An advertising pamphlet distributed by Ustvol'skaya's publisher Hans Sikorski in 1976 lists selected works (in light of the wait some pieces were forced to endure before their publication) until 'Composition for Piccolo, Tuba and Piano' (later Composition No. 1) of 1971 and observes the stylistic overlap between the two composers.⁴³⁹ This led the pamphlet's author to assert: 'Even at the beginning of the fifties in her early compositions (three sonatas for piano, preludes, a Sonata for Violin, a Trio for Piano, and Octet) she found that peculiar style which determines her composer's individuality up to now', concluding, 'Ustvol'skaya has avoided the influence of the greatest composers of the 20th century. Her music, judging not by style or manner, but by its spirit, is closer to D. D. Shostakovich more than to anybody else'.⁴⁴⁰ It is perhaps a comparison of Ustvol'skaya's Piano Concerto with Shostakovich's Piano Concerto for Strings, Trumpet and Percussion Op. 35, that provides us with the most tangible stylistic overlap (Ex. 4.15 and 4.16).

⁴³⁹ This 1976 pamphlet lists selected works up until *Composition for Piccolo, Tuba and Piano* (1971). This, of course, was years before her re-cataloguing of the 1990s, and thus many of her 'official' works are listed here as 'basic works'.

⁴⁴⁰ Advertising pamphlet held at the PSS and accessed by the author 06/10/2008: Unknown Author, *Galina Ustvol'skaya* (Hamburg: Musikverlag Hans Sikorski, 1976).

Ex. 4.15: Opening Motif of Shostakovich's Piano Concerto No. 1, Op. 35

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Ex. 4.16: Opening Motif of Ustvolskaya's Piano Concerto for Strings and Timpani

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Shostakovich's First Piano Concerto was completed on July 1933, fourteen years prior to the completion of Ustvolskaya's. Aside from the obvious parallels regarding the instrumentation choices of both pieces (which is virtually identical), there are several further reverberations of note, not least the similarity of the opening motivic writing:⁴⁴¹ Aside from the remarkably dramatic rise and fall of homophonic dotted rhythms articulated by strings, both works are also firmly rooted in C minor.

In Shostakovich's Concerto, an amusingly eccentric circus style emerges as the second subject in the first movement and – returning in the finale — permeates the entire work. The twisting and turning chromatic semiquaver runs of Ustvolskaya's second subject has its roots in

⁴⁴¹ The opening dramatic, scotch-snap rhythms also sound remarkably similar to Shostakovich's Fifth Symphony (1937), which was written more than fifteen years before Ustvolskaya's Piano Concerto.

Shostakovich's circus-like gestures, and the introduction of the chromatic runs seems to emulate the clown-like chromaticism of Shostakovich. The prevalence of the flattened sixth in Ustvolskaya's A minor scalar figures also recreates Shostakovich's partiality to such a technique.⁴⁴² It is Ustvolskaya's *Andante (Cantabile)* that probably sounds the most Shostakovichian of all sections, mirroring the harrowing lyricism found in so many of her teacher's works. These patches of benevolent lyricism contradict the way in which Laurel Fay encapsulates Shostakovich's Concerto in the main: 'A repertory staple, a guaranteed crowd-pleaser, brimming with youthful ambivalence'.⁴⁴³ Unlike her later works, Ustvolskaya's Piano Concerto is written for a lush orchestra, includes rhythmic variety, bar lines, elegant melodies, harmonic consonances and clear harmonic progressions: all in all a far more conventional work than any of her later pieces.

Despite the melodic similarities between these works, Ustvolskaya's Piano Concerto certainly does not capture quite the same buffoonery employed by Shostakovich. Although, as demonstrated, the *substance* of the two Concertos is effectively similar, it is the composers' respective treatment of these foundational motives that provide the distinguishing hallmarks of their work. In the case of Ustvolskaya, this rich, lyrical orchestral work – the earliest work in her catalogue, which on the surface seems a great distance from her fiercely spiritual, mature style – incorporates more of a prophecy of her later style than perhaps initially presumed. It can be exemplified by the journey of the opening motif through the work.

During the opening *Lento Assai*, a minimal first subject is immediately introduced in the solo piano and echoed by the string orchestra in bar 3. This solemn, scotch-snap motif appears once more upon the entrance of the timpani in figure 2, now firmly establishing the rhythm of this motif before the introduction of a calmer, more lyrical second subject. The jocularity of the chromatic runs in figure 3 is, however, short-lived as the passage is not destined to retain its playful nature. Sure enough, by bar 81, the opening dotted motif returns once again in the piano – albeit briefly – above the repeated,

⁴⁴² Mark Mazullo, Chloe Kiritz and Adam Nelson, 'Shostakovich's Preludes and Fugues: Fashioning Identities, Representing Relationships', *College Music Symposium*, Vol. 46 (2006), pp. 77–104.

⁴⁴³ Fay, *Shostakovich: A Life*, op. cit., pp. 73–74.

homophonic crotchets, which provide a pulsating texture underneath, anticipating the hallmark that would later set apart Ustvol'skaya's compositional style. The *Tempo I* in bar 141 sees the accompanying strings in a fast frenzy marked *detached* and *grandiose* – a somewhat neo-classical version of the opening motif appears. The two themes pass through a frenzied development before culminating in an anguished morphing of the chromatic line and the opening material in bar 162. A rhythmic inference of the first subject returns in the thunderous timpani in figure 18, and (marked 'Grave') the scotch-snap rhythm has become insistent and repetitive, and – significantly – not quite so Shostakovichian as in previous material. The rhythmic theme is re-articulated upon every beat before it dissolves into sustained tremolo by bar 189. Chromatic runs in the high register of the piano dismantle the relentless scotch-snap in the piano line into clustered dissonances placed on each crotchet beat in figure 21 (*Pesante*). By figure 22 the treatment of the scotch-snap – which is still constant in the orchestra – is no longer reminiscent of any Shostakovichian lyricism at all, but prophesies the repetition and gruelling brutality that would characterise Ustvol'skaya's mature style. The crotchet clusters in the piano writing at this climactic point give way to a final homophonic declamation of the rhythmic theme in the entire orchestra before embarking on a rather surprising closing section. The scotch-snap still dominates the piano part in the final fourteen bars of the work but consonant crotchet chords in the strings bring the work to a conventional end, firmly in C minor. Despite the conformist coda to this early work, the importunate repetition found in this finale includes certain minimalist undertones that were to occupy Ustvol'skaya in later years.

In summary, the opening to this work can immediately be paralleled with Shostakovich's equivalent, as can many compositional techniques employed throughout particularly the first half of this work. Where Ustvol'skaya's Piano Concerto differs enormously from Shostakovich's is in the treatment of the opening themes and the gradual disintegration of conventional ideas. Even in the earliest works found in her catalogue, written while she was still a student, Ustvol'skaya was showing preliminary signs of her own fiercely independent voice.

It has been previously observed that Octet was a work of Ustvol'skaya's that was greatly admired by Shostakovich. In this work, Ustvol'skaya once more shows her proclivity for short themes and aphoristic gestures. Despite featuring a melodic lyricism, this piece continues her process of moving away from her teacher's influence. The piece includes, for the first time, an unusual combination of instruments and an unconventional manner of thematic development. Each of the four movements consists of two or three short rhythmic motives that – much like the motivic treatment in her Piano Concerto – participate in a steadily pulsed, highly polyphonic juxtaposition of successive alternations and overlaps. For the first time Ustvol'skaya experimented with metric shifts through different time signatures. Harsh dissonances and anguished tritones propel the music to demonic frenzy and the work is eventually brought to rest with a set of apocalyptic timpani strokes.

Ex. 4.17: Ending of Octet

21 **46**

Ob. I
pp espr.

VI. II
p espr.

VI. III
p espr.

VI. IV
p espr.

Timp.
ff espr.

Piano
ff espr.

24

Ob.

Vln. 1

Vln. 2

Timp.
ff espr.

Pno.
ff espr.

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It is not only Ustvolskaya's early works, however, in which a stylistic influence of Shostakovich can be observed. Mishra draws attention to Shostakovich's implementation of the *ostinato* as a departure from Stravinsky's spiky,

dissonant *ostinati* before him. Drawing particular attention to Shostakovich's Piano Quintet (1940) and his Second Piano Trio (1944), Mishra comments on what he refers to as Shostakovich's own mature style, where the *ostinato* plays an important role:

Both works use the device for prolonged periods. Indeed the device dominates their metric flow to the point of being recognisable as a Shostakovich mannerism...The Shostakovich *ostinato* is a feature that can be readily identified in many Soviet Chamber works. The mature style of two of Shostakovich's most prominent pupils, Galina Ustvol'skaya and Boris Tchaikovsky, make extensive use of it.⁴⁴⁴

Sure enough, the repetition saturating Ustvol'skaya's later works (and already identifiable in her student compositions) could well be indebted to this distinctive hallmark of her composition teacher.

Ustvol'skaya's Grand Duet yet again includes a compelling rhythmic force that transcends the chamber music setting of the work and she pushes her metric experimentation to new heights. Both Grand Duet and Octet end inconclusively but track the same torment amidst the elegant lyricism evocative of her teacher.⁴⁴⁵ The prevailing tragedy in all of Ustvol'skaya's works can be easily traced to Shostakovich's approaches as it is also true of many other of Shostakovich's tragic works, for instance, the brooding intensity of his Tenth Symphony and the harrowing lyricism of his Eighth Quartet (1960). This, however, is not the only motivation that both Shostakovich and Ustvol'skaya shared. Of particular note are Shostakovich's Preludes and Fugues and Ustvol'skaya's Preludes. Both were written at around the same time marking Bach's bicentenary – and indeed are greatly indebted to the great composer's own work of the same genre (see Chapter 4: Ustvol'skaya and Bach for further analysis) and both works make a significant contribution to the pianist's repertoire of the twentieth century.

⁴⁴⁴ Mishra, *op. cit.*, p. 486.

⁴⁴⁵ Mishra, *ibid.*.

4.5: Final Thoughts: *Clinamen*, *Kenosis* and *Askesis* – The Power of Pedagogy

Although absolutely impossible to determine, a combination of the factors discussed earlier in the chapter, probably compounded by time and old age, is in all likelihood responsible for the acrimony Ustvolskaya felt towards Shostakovich. Had it not been for Ustvolskaya's tense nature, perhaps no credible objection to Shostakovich's behaviour throughout the years could have been ascertained; after all, it does not seem as if her confrontational conduct was solely reserved for him. Many explanations have been offered by Ustvolskaya and her allies as to Shostakovich's weakness, but nothing provides convincing, solid evidence that Shostakovich's conduct was solely to blame. His joining the Communist Party, for example, has been seen as a personality flaw, and deemed unacceptable by Ustvolskaya, but can it really be taken as a critical personality flaw? Shostakovich was in a very publicly precarious position. Surely it was his covert expression that conveys his true attitude towards Ustvolskaya? If it was this private communication that preoccupied Ustvolskaya in the years leading up to her death then perhaps the notoriety surrounding their relationship would have been quite different. Due to her obstinate refusal to discuss the connection objectively, we will never know the true course of their relationship. Whatever the true motive for Ustvolskaya's subsequent bitterness may be, it was undoubtedly invigorated by her uncompromising and obstinate character.

Musically speaking, however, there is an undeniable pedagogical influence in Ustvolskaya's early works emanating from her composition teacher. However, perhaps Shostakovich may overshadow even her later works, which on the surface appear isolated and free from his influence. As has been demonstrated, Ustvolskaya's change in compositional style correlated with her change in attitude towards Shostakovich (c. 1961) and, as a consequence, *he still largely overshadows her mature work*. This is an issue explored in the literary field by Harold Bloom in his monograph 'The Anxiety of Influence: A Theory of Poetry' where he explores the various pedagogical manifestations of influence in literature, categorising them in six revisionary

ratios. Bloom's first category – that of *Clinamen*⁴⁴⁶ – resonates with the influence Shostakovich had upon Ustvolskaya in the earliest part of her career. In her earliest works (Piano Concerto, Trio, Octet) Ustvolskaya's music appears as a corrective movement. By accepting Shostakovich's work (Fifth Symphony, Piano Concerto etc.) as a precursor, Ustvolskaya accepted the 'accuracy' of Shostakovich's music up to a certain point, then *swerved* from this precursor into the new direction of her own individual voice.

By the 1950s, when Ustvolskaya's works were breaking away from Shostakovich's taught style to an even greater extent, the influence perpetrated by Shostakovich had by this time developed to what Bloom describes as *Kenosis*⁴⁴⁷ – the breaking away from the precursor. Ustvolskaya's Sonata for Violin and Piano saw the genesis of her individualism. The implications of this include the 'emptying out' of Shostakovich's music and a sense of discontinuity with it as a precursor. Ustvolskaya's sonata had by this time so far broken away from Shostakovich's archetypal musical style that the result was Shostakovich using Ustvolskaya's own developed compositional techniques in this period.

The final category of Bloom's that has relevance in the Shostakovich/Ustvolskaya relationship is his fifth ratio: *Askesis*,⁴⁴⁸ where the latter composer (or, in this case, poet) moves towards a state of solipsism or self-purgation. Instead of the sense of the emptying out of Shostakovich's music (as in *Kenosis*), by the 1970s Ustvolskaya curtailed the sense of Shostakovich's influence. In her later piano sonatas, her Compositions Nos. 1–3 and Symphonies Nos. 2–5, Ustvolskaya truncated Shostakovich's voice entirely in each of her works.

This does not, however, negate the influence that Shostakovich had over his former pupil. In all cases mentioned – *Clinamen*, *Kenosis* and *Askesis* – there is the unifying factor that the category could not exist without the precursor itself. The swerve of the *Clinamen* is away from the precursor, the *Kenosis* is the emptying of the precursor and the *Askesis* is the isolation of the composer in regard to the precursor. Ustvolskaya's compositional style may

⁴⁴⁶ Harold Bloom, *The Anxiety of Influence: A Theory of Poetry* (New York, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), pp. 19–48.

⁴⁴⁷ Bloom, *ibid.*, pp. 49–76.

⁴⁴⁸ Bloom, *ibid.*, pp. 115–138.

have radically changed throughout her career – and on the surface turned away from the teachings of her former composition teacher – but her mature work is still largely defined by him. As Bokman aptly summarises: ‘By denying Shostakovich, Ustvolskaya continues his tradition in her own way, as her denial is largely based on his work’.⁴⁴⁹

It is worth mentioning that Ustvolskaya was not in favour of replicating the musical style of a composer’s teacher, so in all likelihood would have chosen not to look favourably upon the influence she had on Shostakovich. Having noticed a resemblance between her own music and a student’s composition, she remarked that she does not like it when someone writes like her. “‘Shostakovich really liked it when others wrote ‘like him’ but I don’t” says Ustvolskaya. “Do you know Sviridov’s Piano Trio?” she continues. “I, honestly, can’t tell it from Shostakovich’s Trio. So, Shostakovich praised this Trio a lot. One must search for his own style.”⁴⁵⁰

On the surface Ustvolskaya and Shostakovich seem as though they are products from exactly the same cultural and political background and so lend themselves to direct and easy comparison. With all such things, however, this is not exactly the case: the truth is far more convoluted. The thirteen years that separated their births was to have a huge impact on both composers’ lives and works, and consequently drove a vast wedge between their respective contexts. Shostakovich’s career began as part of the aftermath of the revolution, during a time of optimism, enthusiasm and general elevation. Ten years later – at the same point in Ustvolskaya’s career – she was working in a military hospital and being exposed to the horrors of the Second World War. Politically, things had changed drastically for musicians by the early 1940s and Ustvolskaya was forced to carve out a career for herself amidst intense repression and aesthetic control. Of course, Shostakovich also faced the difficulties imposed by Stalinist Russia – and, naturally, they were not without effect – but it came at a different stage in his career, when he had already established himself as composer. (For example, Shostakovich’s premieres were treated as famous, cultural events, whereas Ustvolskaya’s sometimes had to wait decades for even a small, domestic performance). In short, although the social and historical

⁴⁴⁹ Bokman, *op. cit.*, p. 44.

⁴⁵⁰ Bokman, *ibid.*, p. 23.

connection between the two composers seems obvious, the Ustvolskaya/Shostakovich association must be viewed as the composers belonging to two different epochs of Russian history. When the subtle but no less significant contrast is considered, it is perhaps not surprising that Bokman can so easily categorise Ustvolskaya's music as 'rational and selective' in contrast to Shostakovich's 'impulsive and eclectic' oeuvre.⁴⁵¹ Although the music of both composers could only have come out of twentieth-century Russia, this fundamental difference offers an explanation for the struggle Ustvolskaya was forced to confront with regards to her teacher's influence. Breaking away from the pedagogical influence enabled Ustvolskaya to convey more accurately the personal, social, political and spiritual context of her own experience and time.

Fig. 4.18: 'Pedagogical Humour'

‘Который год из этих славных стен
Идет череда бесславных смен.
Идут, идут –
Хоть караул кричи!
Все маленькие шостаковичи!’

‘Year after year these glorious portals,
Disgorge a stream of inglorious mortals,
they keep on coming – in vain one bemoans,
All the Shostakovich clones!’⁴⁵²



⁴⁵¹ Bokman, *ibid.*, p. 50.

⁴⁵² A. Kostomolotsky, 'Pedagogical Humour' *Sovetskaya muzyka*, No. 4 (Moscow: Sovetsky kompozitor, 1948). Translated in Fay, *Shostakovich: A Life*, op. cit., p. 240.

Ustvolskaya and the Znamenny Raspev

Chapter 5

5.1: Why the Znamenny Raspev?

Ustvolskaya never wished to be pigeonholed or categorised with any other composer or trend. This wish to be remote from all influence suggests a further elevation of the spiritual content of her work: her intention was ultimately to dislocate it from any man-made practice. The individuality of Ustvolskaya's work, and the difference between her approach and those of her Soviet contemporaries, although reinforcing her hermitic way of life, also exalts her chosen extra-musical values: Ustvolskaya believed herself to have turned away from the teaching she received from Shostakovich in the Stalinist era, in order to find her own voice from within herself: a personal expression of spirituality. It is with this overriding spiritual proclivity in mind that Ustvolskaya's appropriation of musical material from the Russian Orthodox Church's znamenny raspev is of note. Although Ustvolskaya obstinately refused to acknowledge this influence throughout her lifetime, evidence of characteristics of the chant is constantly found in each of her profoundly spiritual works, without exception. The frequency with which aspects of the znamenny chant occur in her compositions is patent, and therefore demands extensive exploration. However, in light of her refusal to confirm publicly that it was an important influence, the forces behind Ustvolskaya's inclusion of the chant are ambiguous.⁴⁵³ When her former student Bokman dared to address the subject with Ustvolskaya, asking whether she borrowed any system of notation or melodic development from the chant, she answered that she had arrived at her system differently.⁴⁵⁴

⁴⁵³ Ustvolskaya did warn her students against citing folk music or quoting other people's music in their compositions, stating that this was 'for people who can't write anything on their own'. Bokman, op. cit., p. 22. However, this was most likely an ironic comment targeted towards Shostakovich. This statement cannot be accepted as true since this thesis has already ascertained that – in the earliest part of her career, at least – Ustvolskaya seized musical material from other sources to include in her own work (see Ustvolskaya's use of Shostakovich's *Symphonic Fragment*, Chapter 4).

⁴⁵⁴ This answer is significantly different from the absolutism found in her official stance regarding this subject, implying that perhaps Ustvolskaya was more aware of a connection

What we can be sure of, however, is the personal context and artistic climate from which Ustvolskaya's music sprang. Firstly, Uspensky was on affable terms with Ustvolskaya, holding a teaching post at the very same conservatory in which Ustvolskaya worked, which would have provided Ustvolskaya with access to his research of Russian liturgical melodies. In addition to his flourishing research, 'The Khrushchev Thaw' – as it has been dubbed – saw a sudden increase in the popularity of the compositional approach of including aspects of *znamenny raspev*, as Uspensky's collection of transcribed *znamenny* melodies was published. This was the first time Soviet composers had gained access to such an overtly religious publication and it was thus an appropriate time for Ustvolskaya to continue to explore such traditions. Added to which, Yury Butsko's⁴⁵⁵ *Polyphonic Concerto* (1972),⁴⁵⁶ with an exhaustive explanation of his inclusion of the chant in a lengthy preface, was made available to the public; Schnittke's *Hymns* (1974–1979) soon followed, implementing the same compositional approach. Indeed, the 1970s saw a flurry of compositional activity for Ustvolskaya, during which time some of her strongest personal (and, beyond coincidence, most profoundly spiritual) music materialised.⁴⁵⁷

between her music and the chant than what she later insisted on.

⁴⁵⁵ Butsko is a composer from Moscow who studied at the Moscow Conservatory alongside Schnittke, among others. Butsko is a great expert on the Old Believers and the music of the Orthodox Church as a dedicated believer himself, having attended church regularly and consistently throughout his life. He spent many years adapting the ancient chant to modern times, and devised a system through which he could organise the *znamenny raspev* for the basis of his own work.

⁴⁵⁶ The full title of this work is: *Polyphonic Concerto for Four Keyboards: Nineteen Counterpoints on a theme from Znamenny Chant*.

⁴⁵⁷ The 1970s saw the composition of Ustvolskaya's Compositions 1, 2 and 3 and her Symphony No. 2, her first symphony for nearly a quarter of a century, which paved the way for her final three in the subsequent decade.

always refused to accept any reform of the *znamenny raspev* and still today stalwartly remain true to the ancient chant repertory, providing a hugely valuable resource for any such investigation. Many of these Old Believers died as a consequence of the ruptures that occurred in the Orthodox Church, and thus the preservation of the chant has assumed an uncompromising purpose as it has been handed down from generation to generation. As the Old Believers' historical and social role as nonconformists who have preserved the chant alongside its liturgical practice for centuries is considered, it is apt that Ustvolskaya would seize upon the *znamenny raspev* as a musical symbol of political and religious dissidence. It must be asserted, however, that the *znamenny raspev* was never the exclusive property of the Old Believers, despite their arguments regarding authenticity. Transcribed anthologies of *znamenny raspev* could be widely found in churches, which provided a rich resource to those composers, such as Alexander Kastalsky (1856–1926) (see Chapter 5.9). Ustvolskaya, however, was not a church-goer so would have only been exposed to the chant through musicological investigations such as those from Uspensky and Butsko.

It is also necessary to refer briefly to the extent to which *znamenny* chant had already been absorbed into the Russian music canon. Ustvolskaya's deep knowledge of the work of Musorgsky, Tchaikovsky, Stravinsky, Rachmaninov and (particularly) Shostakovich would undoubtedly have brought her into contact with these ancient melodies, even without having had direct contact with the Old Believers herself.⁴⁶⁰ By the early twentieth century, *znamenny raspev* had become a significant element in Russian musical thought, but its reverberations are broader in a temporal sense: it has the capacity to transcend time and geopolitical change and is the symbol – politically, socially and spiritually – of a historical unification, the very essence of Russian consciousness. Ustvolskaya's incorporation of aspects of the chant is therefore, in many ways, natural as a composer within the Russian tradition, sensible to her vast heritage in the religious field. In the social context particular to twentieth-century Russia this compositional approach enabled Ustvolskaya to

⁴⁶⁰ However, according to Dullaghan, the possibility that Ustvolskaya had personally come into contact with this tradition is entirely feasible although the present author has never found any evidence of this. Dullaghan, *op. cit.*, p. 21.

continue uniquely Russian traditions, providing a sense of national identity amidst the destruction in which she was compelled to compose. Znamenny raspev also brought with it a symbolic spiritual statement: by including the chant, Ustvolskaya could secretly incorporate the spiritual messages that the authorities had so vigorously forbidden.

Butsko explores the microtonal properties of znamenny raspev in the preface to his *Polyphonic Concerto*. In order to work methodically with znamenny raspev in a new, harmonised context, Butsko constructed a system of extracting a melodic scale from the chant that, although restricted in practice by the compass of the human voice, is extended through the imposition of trichords above and below until the starting pitch is restored. The end result contains twelve tones, described by Butsko as a form of Russian dodecaphony. In addition, as the notes in the scales get higher the number of flat signs increase, and as the notes lower sharps predominate.⁴⁶¹ Thus the final aspect of Ustvolskaya's attraction to znamenny raspev was the vast musical possibilities it presented. The chant, free from a rigid structure, offered the possibility of dissonant harmonies, exotic modes, and metric freedom: a modernist musical vocabulary that departed from Ustvolskaya's Russian masters and enabled her to progress creatively, whilst staying true to her Russian heritage.

5.2: The Byzantine Connection: The Xenakis and Ustvolskaya Parallel

The znamenny raspev's kinship with Russian folksong certainly provided Ustvolskaya with an opportunity to escape the musical 'restrictions' imposed by the 'cultured' music in the canon of western art music through a return to music in its purest – *natural* – form. Ustvolskaya's selection of established musical genres – *the cultural* – in order to express these natural forms, is symbolic of Russia's unique position as a meeting-point of several dichotomies apparent throughout the ages, including: East versus West; Natural versus

⁴⁶¹ Alfred Schnittke in Alexander Ivashkin, *A Schnittke Reader* (Bloomington, Ind.: Indiana University Press, 2002), p. 14.

Cultural; and Spiritual versus Material. As a result, it is all too easy to characterise Ustvolskaya's incorporation of elements of the chant as 'exotic' or 'Eastern', yet a brief examination of the history and origins of the chant also enables a location of her work in terms of Western traditions, and this should not be overlooked.

It is undisputed that the origin of the Russian Orthodox Church's znamenny chant is in the music from the Byzantine Christian church. Constantinople, the capital of the Byzantine Empire, was the very epitome of East meeting West, as it amalgamated Western administration with Eastern Orthodoxy.⁴⁶² Before its journey to Russia, the original Orthodox chant was composite in character and developed during the establishment of Constantinople in 330–1453 AD.⁴⁶³ Inspired by the monophonic vocal music performed in early Christian cities such as Alexandria and Ephesus,⁴⁶⁴ the text of the chant was of paramount importance, devised to accentuate and, consequently, elevate those words that ordinarily would have been entrusted to regular speech. Russian liturgical music began its journey following the conversion of Russia to Christianity in 988 AD after emissaries had been sent to Constantinople.⁴⁶⁵ Russia's acceptance of religion from the Greeks implies an initially strong connection between the two traditions.⁴⁶⁶ According to Moody, 'Schools following the Byzantine model were opened, where the Slavonic language, church singing, architecture and icon-painting were taught.'⁴⁶⁷

Ustvolskaya's extensive use of aspects of the Byzantine chant following its displacement to Russia invites comparisons with parallel activity in the West, and this 'Byzantine Connection' becomes progressively noteworthy. The most prominent post-war composer in Greece was Iannis Xenakis, who, with

⁴⁶² Egon Wellesz, *A History of Byzantine Music and Hymnography* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1961), p. 31.

⁴⁶³ N. Zernov, *Moscow: The Third Rome* (London: Rosemary Pugh Books, 1936), p. 7.

⁴⁶⁴ An ancient Greek city on the Western Coast of Asia Minor, in modern day Turkey.

⁴⁶⁵ The alterations imposed on liturgical chant as it encountered Russian folk music opens a fascinating line of enquiry, which is only now beginning to be investigated. For a comprehensive account of the origins of folk music and its relationship with nature see Maxim Brazhnikov, *Novye pamyatniki znamennogo raspeva* [*New Monuments of the Znamenny Chant*] (Leningrad: Muzyka, 1967). The relationship between znamenny raspev and folk music will be examined in more detail in section 5.8: The Sacred as Folk.

⁴⁶⁶ Ivan Moody, Augustine Casiday ed., 'Music in the Orthodox Church', *The Orthodox World* (London: Routledge, 2012), pp. 538–539.

⁴⁶⁷ Moody, *ibid.*, p. 539.

his instrumental music, progressed further than anyone else in experimenting with combining music with rigid mathematical theories. During the 1960s Xenakis's compositions were concerned with a serious engagement with the voice and Greek classical dramas⁴⁶⁸ but he began to explore his Byzantine roots and incorporate characteristics of the ancient chant into his compositions. By way of explanation of his inclusion of this ancient music, and – perhaps more importantly – in an attempt to consider what is suitable music for the ancient drama, Xenakis states that ‘The ancient drama cannot possibly be expressed with tonal or atonal music like serialism. This type of music is typical of another epoch’.⁴⁶⁹

It was during the earliest part of his life that Xenakis became interested in the Byzantine Church and folk music. Having been born in Romania and later displaced to Greece at the age of ten, he had experienced a rich diversity of music by a very young age. Both Romania and Greece had a weak western art music tradition yet, conversely, a very vibrant folk culture. His interest in local music flourished as his musical studies were nurtured, inspiring him to write several choral and instrumental works (although these were later destroyed).⁴⁷⁰

Xenakis's compositional technique of selecting an ancient music to convey contemporary ideas is very relevant in terms of a parallel to Ustvolskaya's musical activity: even more so as he began to look back to his Byzantine roots. It is as this Byzantine connection is contemplated that a hypothesis can be drawn that there might be some common musical characteristics between Ustvolskaya and Xenakis, despite the limits imposed by the obvious historical, political and geographical boundaries, which demands exploration.

Like *znamenny raspev*, Byzantine chant is also entirely vocal, adhering to the Orthodox theology that instrumental music is, to a large extent, representative of the secular and pagan, and is inclined to induce some unwanted form of emotionalism. Furthermore, in the Byzantine and *znamenny*

⁴⁶⁸ Evaggelia Vagopoulou, Makis Solomos, Anastasia Georgaki and Giorgos Zervos, eds., ‘The Universality of Xenakis’ *Oresteia*’, *International Symposium Iannis Xenakis: Definitive Proceedings* (2006) <<http://ciem.mshparisnord.org/ColloqueXenakis/>> (accessed on 12/09/2013).

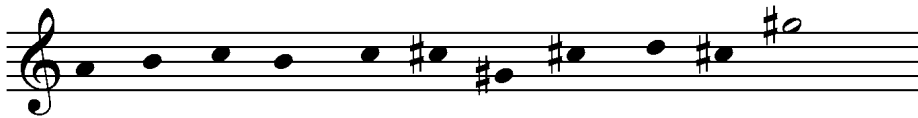
⁴⁶⁹ Iannis Xenakis, *Antiquity and Contemporary Music* (Athens: TaMa, 2005).

⁴⁷⁰ Mario Bois, *Iannis Xenakis: The Man and his Music: A Conversation with the Composer and a Description of his Work* (London: Boosey and Hawkes, 1967), p. 6.

Ex. 5.4: Xenakis, *A Colone*, figure 673, skeleton melody of choir



Ex. 5.5: Skeleton melody in the opening of Galina Ustvolskaya's Piano Sonata No. 2



Byzantine ecclesiastical music was essentially homophonic and diatonic and intervallic similarities between Ustvolskaya's and Xenakis's work are not restricted to those examples given (especially when one applies Taruskin's tri-chordic analysis – used later in this chapter to examine Ustvolskaya's music – to Xenakis's music: an issue that demands more research in the future).⁴⁷²

Xenakis also frequently declined to make any concession to the imposed restrictions of bar lines. Take for instance, the case earlier illustrated in Ex. 5.4 and Ex. 5.5 the melodic material of both extracts is similar, but the effect of rhythmic freedom – although an effect drawn upon by both composers – is achieved in an entirely contrasting fashion. Where Ustvolskaya achieves this effect by emphasising every beat of the bar and thus removing rhythmic hierarchy, Xenakis implements extensive syncopation and various time signatures to avoid any sense of an established metre. In the opening of *A Colone*, the melody of the choir is sustained and uncomplicated, yet is characterised by an unbalanced rhythmic feel.

Like *znamenny raspev*, Byzantine music exists as a product of a vibrant, contemporary ecclesiastical life, so there are extra-musical issues to consider too. The sense of community – of belonging to a people, nation and time – is

⁴⁷² Further research regarding the parallels between these two composers through this Byzantine connection has recently been undertaken by the author with the intention to publish in a separate, future paper as it is a huge area of research.

also an aspect of Orthodox philosophy faithfully retained in Xenakis's setting of Aeschylus's *Oresteia* (1965–1966)⁴⁷³, as well as throughout Ustvolskaya's entire catalogue. Both composers – in keeping with Orthodox practice – fend off the inclination to elevate subjectivity in their compositions, but represent a sense of communal expression. It must be noted, however, that even though Xenakis referred to religious practice, he was not a believer and – in contrast to Ustvolskaya – never wished to transmit theological ideas. Xenakis turned to an historic era in order to transmit what he considered to be true Greek, unwesternised music.

Xenakis commences his essay 'Antiquity and Contemporary Music' by discussing the music of *Oresteia*, with a definition of Greek theatre as 'total experience', a practice that does not occur merely as a sensual experience, but that transpires in the spheres of thought.⁴⁷⁴ Xenakis requires a synchronised, unison delivery of text from the choir as they mass-communicate: for Xenakis, the natural pulsation of the original text was the foundation of *Oresteia*. He states: 'The poetics of speech is the most important tradition we have inherited'⁴⁷⁵ basing *Kassandra* purely on the melody of the ancient text. During the transformation of Erynies to Eumenides, Xenakis greatly alters the role of the chorus without losing the unison, chant-like expression, deliberately retaining the communal expression so central to his approach. In exactly the same manner as Ustvolskaya, Xenakis specifically directs his musicians' actions and dress as well their musical performance, strictly removing any sense of the performer's self-sufficiency, and thrusting the performance into the realms of ritual.

Xenakis, through his electronic music, possessed a medium through which his quotation of liturgical chant could be more explicit than that of Ustvolskaya. In *Bohor* (1962) – a piece for four channel electronic tape – Xenakis includes samples of Byzantine chant⁴⁷⁶, and *Pour La Paix* (1982) for

⁴⁷³ First performed on 14/06/1966 under the direction of Alexis Solomos, Ypsilanti, Michigan. With the exception of the additional parts of *Kassandra* (1987) and *La Déesse Athéna* (1992), which both include a baritone soloist, the choral element predominates in all three sections.

⁴⁷⁴ Xenakis, op. cit., p. 5.

⁴⁷⁵ Xenakis, op. cit., p. 21. Although scholars cannot be certain concerning the ancient sound of Mycean Greek, it is widely accepted that it represented a harsher version than more modern dialects and it is thus apparent that Xenakis was interested in an exploration of this archaic Greek. Vagopoulou, op. cit..

⁴⁷⁶ Rebecca Kim, 'Iannis Xenakis' *Bohor* (1962)', *Masterpieces of 20th-Century Multi-Channel*

electronic tape and choir consists of visceral and primeval choral writing. It is the electronic samples that provide the listener with external sound references, enhancing a listening experience by providing a less ambiguous context for the choral writing: a listener can thus discern the references to Byzantine chant with fewer difficulties. Ustvol'skaya's reference to *znamenny* chant is increasingly convoluted as she reinvents the chant as instrumental chamber music within a contemporary context, in order to communicate her point of reference. This, of course, is the same technique adopted by Xenakis in his instrumental writing.

Xenakis's article 'Towards a Metamusic' explores in depth the history of Greek and Byzantine music, drawing conclusions accordingly regarding its consequences upon western art music. Xenakis's attitude was that music could surpass itself by progressing in an 'out-side-time' category, away from a temporal attitude that tends to dominate. Xenakis gave the title 'out-side-time' to a musical element that can be categorised as a constituent that no horizontal or vertical combination of its elements may alter, e.g. a given pitch scale: the event of the scale's occurrence belongs to the *temporal* category, but the event within itself is 'out-side-time'.⁴⁷⁷ He stated that Byzantine music can be analysed in terms of these categories – away from its historical context and through a more structural, or architectural, approach to musical composition – and therefore is rendered a suitable motivation for progressive music in the twentieth century. It was Xenakis's vision that the inclusion of out-side-time elements 'could unify the expression of fundamental structures of all Asian, African and European music'.⁴⁷⁸

Even though a universal musical expression sounds far-fetched, this connection of Ustvol'skaya and Xenakis through Orthodox chant demonstrates that we can at the very least ascertain that certain historical or geographical boundaries can be ideologically surpassed. Xenakis's music can undoubtedly be considered exceptionally modern or avant-garde and – on the surface – Ustvol'skaya's may not. But, despite these aesthetic contrasts, both composers

Tape Music <<http://www.music.columbia.edu/masterpieces/notes/xenakis/notes.html>> (accessed 26/05/2015).

⁴⁷⁷ Xenakis, op. cit., p. 183.

⁴⁷⁸ Iannis Xenakis, *Formalized Music: Thought and Mathematics in Composition* (Bloomington, Ind., London: Indiana University Press, 1971), p. 200.

devise their Modernist language from paralleled ancient roots and, as a result, the parallels in their music are striking, and comparisons clear.

5.3: Ustvol'skaya, Znamenny Raspev and Text

The emphasis Xenakis put on the communal expression of the text is hugely indebted to ancient chant. As with Byzantine chant, *znamenny raspev* was completely shaped by the text the music conveyed. In Orthodox theology the voice was – and still is – seen as the only appropriate musical instrument to use in worship. As Cavarnos writes:

The Greek Church Fathers ruled out the execution of church music by means of instruments as well as the accompaniment of the chant by instruments, as incompatible with the sublime, spiritual character of the religion of Christ. ... Supporting the Patristic basis for excluding all man-made musical instruments in church is the consensus of great philosophers, such as Aristotle and Emerson, that the ‘human voice is the best, most refined of all musical instruments.’⁴⁷⁹

The driving force behind any *znamenny* melody is the text, as demonstrated by the diagram in Table 5.6. The text is responsible for the entire shaping of the chant’s composition. For example, the repeated music is dependent upon repetition of the words – the text itself is responsible for the liturgical meaning conveyed as well as the applied metric rhythms. These subcategories, in turn, shape other subcategories, for example, repetition – as a subcategory – incorporates significant liturgical relevance as well as reinforce modal and metric gestures and, likewise, liturgical meaning will be enhanced by cryptographic references and metric implications.

⁴⁷⁹ Cavarnos, *op. cit.*, pp. 70–71.

Table 5.6: Prominence of text in znamenny raspev

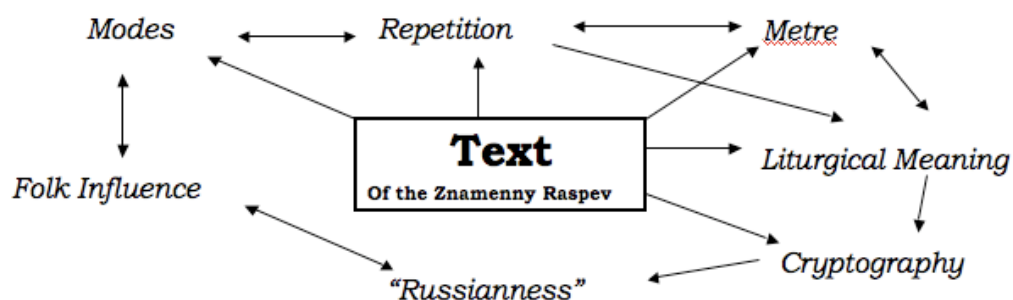


Table 5.7: Prominence of text in Ustvol'skaya's music



By replacing the words 'of Znamenny Raspev' in the central box of Table 5.6, with 'of Ustvol'skaya's Music' (Table 5.7) the diagram *remains unchanged*. This successfully demonstrates, not merely the apparent parallels in the musical language, but also the similarities regarding the motivations and functions that surround both musics. Ustvol'skaya used the musical gestures of the znamenny raspev to make cryptic references to the vast spiritual matrix that encompasses Orthodox music and, as a result, that same underlying spiritual matrix is intimated in heightened fashion.

The vocal quality of the znamenny raspev, with such an emphasis on the text, was also attractive to composers earlier on in the Russian art music tradition. Musorgsky used the asymmetrical aspect of the melodic lines of

znamenny chant in his pursuit of naturalistic word setting. This ‘artistic realism’ translated the realism of life into musical form, by rejecting repeated forms of symmetry in favour of the unpredictability of real life.⁴⁸⁰ The half-speaking, half-singing technique required from Ustvolskaya’s narrator (in Symphonies Nos. 3, 4 and 5) is greatly indebted to this Musorgskyan approach,⁴⁸¹ with no fixed execution of the words required as the melody is determined purely by the lifelike expression of the text. For instance, in Ustvolskaya’s Symphony No. 3 there is no pitch notated for the narrator, yet a rhythmic direction is given – the text syllabically set – denying the performer complete autonomy. Ustvolskaya continues to preserve a sense of altered time throughout her work: in keeping with typical characteristics of znamenny chant, Ustvolskaya includes no fewer than five general pauses in her Composition No. 2. These pauses provide the narrator with a similar syllabic freedom that demanded from a cantor in the znamenny tradition, providing the musical line with relief from strict metric pulsation, redolent of the znamenny practice of pausing at the end of a line of text.

Inspired by znamenny raspev, Ustvolskaya’s text and music are never considered separate entities: where there is a vocal line, the chant-like melodies are a sonic expression of prayerful texts, in which music is indivisible from the word. This is observed in many Old Believer communities to the extent that they consider it a sin to sing for any form of entertainment and, as a result, preserve their tradition solely for its liturgical function.⁴⁸² This devotion to the natural voice found in znamenny practice and Ustvolskaya’s music, combined with a disinclination to develop the human voice artistically, is a far cry from the progressive attitude commanded by the western art music canon.

⁴⁸⁰ As part of this artistic realism, Musorgsky developed his preoccupation with people who constituted the lower social strata of society.

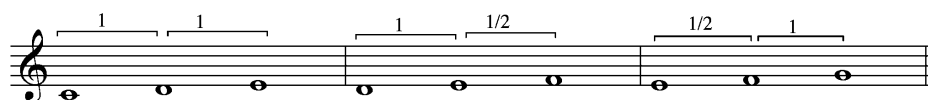
⁴⁸¹ And, indeed, reminiscent of Schoenberg’s *Sprechgesang*.

⁴⁸² In conversation with Nikita Simmons (a Russian Orthodox Old Believer, living in Woodburn, Oregon, U.S.A. and director of the *Typicon Translation Project*, an online library of Orthodox resources: <<http://syntax.info>>), Joensuu, 06/06/2007.

5.4: Znamenny Raspev and Modes

Despite the apparent absence of structural symmetry in znamenny raspev, there are very relevant architectural rules that are evident in any given canticle that provide contrast and variety as the melody is created by its passing through various types of tri-chord. Smolensky affirms the recurrent substantiation of tri-chordic arrangements in the chant (Ex. 5.8) The compass of the chant can be contrasted and varied by subtle exploitation and alternation of the following tri-chords: 1) C–D–E (T–T), 2) D–E–F (T–ST), and 3) E–F–G (ST–T). Configurations of tones and semitones in short motifs are thus a typical characteristic of znamenny chant.⁴⁸³

Ex. 5.8: Smolensky's tri-chord diagram



It is typically characteristic for znamenny melodies to be diatonic, habitually proceeding in conjunct melodic movement with the exception of a leap of a fourth or fifth that may transpire at a cadence.⁴⁸⁴ As much of Ustvolskaya's work progresses in stepwise movement, in keeping with the znamenny tradition, it is not surprising that her work is littered with intervals of tones and semitones: bar 4 in Symphony No. 3 is an example of the use of the whole-tone scale in the first double bass line (D \flat , E \flat , F, G), and an emphasised semi-tonal relationship comprises the entire motif that first appears in the oboes at the same bar. Figure 21 in Duet for Violin and Piano consists of clusters in the piano writing, introduced in the very first passage for the piano and thereafter employed throughout the work. These dissonant harmonies immediately establish the importance of semi-tonal and tonal relationships that form the

⁴⁸³ Alfred J. Swan, 'The Znamenny Chant of the Russian Church, Part II', *The Musical Quarterly*, Vol. 26, No. 3 (1940), p. 378.

⁴⁸⁴ Swan, *ibid.*, p. 368.

foundation of the piano writing in this work. The more lyrical melodic lines in the violin part at Figure 18 proceed mainly in stepwise movement, barring larger occasional downward intervals that transpire at quasi-cadence points (which is itself suggestive of znamenny practice of a downward fourth or fifth that can be found at a cadence).⁴⁸⁵ Yet it is as this harmonic language and these intervallic relationships are investigated that Smolensky's findings become increasingly remarkable. Smolensky's tri-chord theories can be identified in Ustvol'skaya's more complex (and certainly more angular) motives. For example, Symphony No. 3 (Ex. 5.9) opens with a five note cluster from the five oboes that can be rearranged into two of the aforementioned tri-chords, if the D \flat adopts an enharmonic function, as can the notes found in the double basses' cluster in bar 6 (Ex. 5.10 and 5.11). A further motif can also be analysed in such a fashion: the first tuba in bar 35 consists of B, C, A, C, D, E, E, which can again be easily reduced to two of the tri-chords (Ex. 5.12). With this in mind the whole tone scale mentioned earlier can also be rearranged accordingly (Ex. 5.13).

⁴⁸⁵ These downward intervals yet again create an impression of speech inflections.

Ex. 5.9: Opening of Symphony No. 3

Espressivo

The score is for the opening of Symphony No. 3, marked **Espressivo**. It features four staves of Oboe, four staves of Trombone, and five staves of Double Bass. The music is in 3/4 time and begins with a key signature of one flat (B-flat). The Oboe parts play a melodic line with dynamics ranging from *mp* to *sf*. The Trombone parts provide harmonic support, with some parts marked *con sord.* (with mutes). The Double Bass parts play a rhythmic accompaniment, with dynamics ranging from *f* to *sf*. The score includes various performance instructions such as *espr.!*, *mp*, *f*, *sf*, and *Marcato*.

Oboe
Trombone
Double Bass

The musical score is divided into three systems. The first system features five Oboe staves. The top staff has a dynamic marking of *sf* and includes accents (*v*) and slurs. The second staff has a dynamic marking of *f* and includes accents (*v*). The third, fourth, and fifth staves are empty. The second system features four Trombone staves. The top staff has a dynamic marking of *f* and includes accents (*v*). The bottom three staves are empty. The third system features five Double Bass staves. Each staff has a dynamic marking of *f* and includes accents (*v*). The dynamics change from *f* to *ff* in the second measure, to *mp* in the third measure, and to *non crescendo* in the fourth measure. The score includes various musical notations such as slurs, accents, and dynamic markings.

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Ex. 5.10: Symphony No. 3, Oboes



Ex. 5.11: Symphony No. 3, Double Basses



Ex. 5.12: Symphony No. 3, Tubas



Ex. 5.13: Symphony No. 3, Whole Tone Scale



Ustvolskaya augments these tonal relationships through the introduction of the changing texture in bar 43. The oboes can be taken as an example. Each oboe is given a minor third interval upon which to oscillate. As the minor third is itself a manipulation of the tri-chords in question (it consists of a tone and semitone), a horizontal appearance of these tri-chords occurs. Simultaneously, however, a vertical implementation also occurs as the oboes play in parallel. The fifth oboe oscillates between a G and a B \flat , the fourth oboe between an A and a C and the third between a B and a D. So at the same time as the minor third relationships are established horizontally, the vertical relationship between G, A and B (T–T) and B \flat , C and D (T–T) is also ascertained.

Ustvolskaya's implementation of these tri-chords is not limited to this particular work. Composition No. 1 *'Dona Nobis Pacem'* is a trio in three movements, scored for piccolo, tuba and piano, a very unconventional group of chosen instruments exploiting the wide pitch range these instruments can achieve. The main theme for this work is found on the tuba at the opening,

consisting of three short motifs: 1) F, G/F#, G#, A, 2) A, B, C and 3) D♭ C♭. The tri-chordic technique is evident yet again in both the first and second motives: F, G, A (T, T), F#, G#, A (T, ST), A, B, C (T, ST). The motif that opens Composition No. 2 *'Dies Irae'* in the piano's right hand consists of G, A♭, G, F: F, G, A♭ (T, ST). Composition No. 3 *'Benedictus qui Venit'* opens with an F# ostinato in the first flute whilst the other flutes sustain a three-note cluster E–F–G (ST–T). The theme first apparent in the piano in Symphony Number 4 *'Prayer'* continues with this tri-chordic harmonic structure: G, F, E, D = D, E, F (T, ST) and E, F, G (ST, T).

At Figure 34–40 in Duet for Violin and Piano, if the C is treated enharmonically, the repeated cluster in the left hand of the piano can also be rearranged into two of the aforementioned tri-chords (A♭–B♭–C (T–ST) and C♭–C–D (ST–T)). Similarly, the repeated clusters in the piano in Figure 56 can be analysed in such a fashion if the middle notes are treated enharmonically (second voice, right hand: G–A–B–C = T–ST, T–ST, second voice, left hand: E–F–G–A = ST–T, T–T, second voice, right hand: E–F#–G–A = T–ST, ST–T, second voice, right hand: D–E–F#–G = T–ST, T–ST and so on). As a result, the implementations of the tri-chords in the clusters can be viewed as a *vertical* placement of Smolensky's analysis and, at the same time, the melodic line that is passed between the piano and violin in the Duet in stepwise movement is a *horizontal* actualisation of Smolensky's observations (Violin, Figure 21–23, Piano, Figure 23–24).

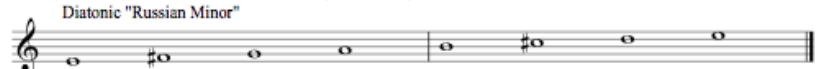
Taruskin discusses the application of the T–ST tri-chord in Stravinsky's compositions. As this chord is reproduced disjunctively upon the major second, the tri-chord gives rise to what is known in the West as the 'Dorian Mode' (producing what Mily Balakirev (1837–1910) had named the Russian minor). Replicated at the minor second, the T–ST tri-chord produces the beginnings of the octatonic scale. The Dorian scale is one of the only diatonic scales that has a symmetrical structure. Similarly, the octatonic scale exhibits all its modal properties whether it is read up or down, adhering to the very basis of the analysis – the symmetrical T–ST tri-chord (Ex. 5.14).⁴⁸⁶

⁴⁸⁶ Taruskin, *Stravinsky and the Russian Traditions: A Biography of the Works Through 'Mavra'*, op. cit., p. 1386.

Ex. 5.14: Scales and Modes

Diatonic 'Russian Minor' (Dorian)

Diatonic "Russian Minor"




Octatonic ascending

Octatonic



Diatonic Descending

Diatonic



Octatonic descending

Octatonic



Taruskin's motivic analysis of the ending of *Svadebka* uncovers a basic scheme that underlies the pitch relations of the complete work, based entirely on melodic configurations, which are wholly founded upon the T–ST tri-chord. This, in turn, corresponds to the very essence of znamenny melody. Stravinsky intensified his relationship with these derived scales through the occasional extension of the aforementioned modes by an addition of an extra T–ST at the end to form a new scale.⁴⁸⁷ Stravinsky's transposition of these modes – to further the analogy – suggests that he viewed his T–ST motif and their implied scales as diatonic *popevki* (short motives found in the chanting tradition); not as detached units, but rather as components in a continuous position of symmetrical rotation.⁴⁸⁸

It has previously been ascertained in this chapter that Ustvolskaya's music is also saturated with the tri-chords that form the very basis of the scales that feature in Stravinsky's music, and this commands a consequent investigation into Ustvolskaya's relationship with these scales. The result is wholly significant, as it may be observed that Ustvolskaya's music is inundated

⁴⁸⁷ Taruskin terms these extensions 'plagal' and 'pluperfect' in adherence with medieval mode theory, in keeping with a rather fine analogy with the znamenny chant, they could be labeled 'dark' and 'thrice-bright' respectively. (Each tri-chord in Shaidur's new Western hexachord system received a name according to the low, medium, high and very high pitches of the chord: dark, simple, bright and thrice-bright respectively).

⁴⁸⁸ For an extensive scalar-analysis of the ending of *Svadebka*, see Taruskin, *ibid.*, pp. 1386–1403.

with relevant examples.⁴⁸⁹ Clear examples of the diatonic scale can also be found. For instance, in the very opening of Piano Prelude No. 3, the second voice in the right hand immediately toys with the 4th, 5th, 6th and 7th degrees of the diatonic ascending scales (G, A, B and C) before launching into an almost complete version of the descending Russian minor scale (D, C, B, A, G, F, E).

In addition to his use of the znamenny tri-chords, Stravinsky's initial sketches for *Svadebka* also seem to illuminate the connection between his approach and znamenny traditions. The vocal line at *Svadebka*, figure 50, is unmistakably indebted to this preliminary sketch.

Ex. 5.15: Znamenny melody

The musical score consists of five staves of music in 4/4 time. The melody is written in a single voice line. The lyrics are in Russian. The score is divided into four sections labeled A, B, C, and D. Section A covers the first two staves, B covers the second and third staves, C covers the third and fourth staves, and D covers the fourth and fifth staves. The lyrics are: Vo che - rmne - me mo - ri bra - ko - ne - is - ku - sni - ya - ne - ve - sti o - braz na - pi - sa - sya dre - - - vle ta - - mo Mo - i - sey raz - de - li - - tel' vo - de zde zhe Ga - vri - il slu - zhi - tel' chui - de -

⁴⁸⁹ For a detailed discussion of the use of the octatonic scale in Piano Sonata No. 5, see Chapter 3.2.1: *Revolution: Eurasianism, Stravinsky and Ustvolskaya*.

Ex. 5.16: Stravinsky, *Svadebka*, figure 50

Bo-slo-vi-te o- tech' s ma- ter - yu sva-vo pa - du ko - stol' - nu grad-du pri-stu-pit

Ka-men-nu ste - nu raz - bit svo - yu su - zhe - nu - yu po nyat'

chey sve - tik nai - dyot

V so - bor, cher - kov' - skho - dit', se - re - bryan krest po tse - lo - vat'

This direct znamenny quotation removes any vestige of doubt about Stravinsky's intentions regarding his implementation of tri-chords and scales. In turn, we can ascertain that Ustvol'skaya adopted the very same compositional technique to fulfil an identical purpose: the representation of znamenny raspev in art music.⁴⁹⁰

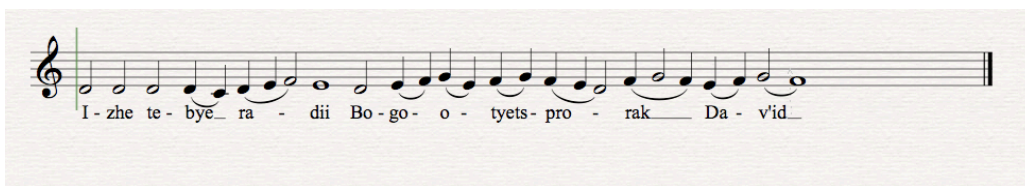
5.5: Znamenny Raspev and Metre

Neither the rhythm nor the forms of the znamenny chant escape the grasp of the text. Indeed the texts, which are often directly taken from passages in the Bible, dictate the rhythm and form according to the measure of speech patterns. No changes to the text, or repetitions enforced by the performers, are permitted. (This, of course, is diametrically opposite to the practice in folksong in which non-symmetrical metres similar to those of znamenny chant are developed freely according to the predilection of the performer.) The earliest forms of polyphonic Russian chant were expressed in a staffless notation (indeed suggestive of Ustvol'skaya's refusal to embrace conventional or

⁴⁹⁰ Transcription by Uspensky. Taruskin, *Stravinsky and the Russian Traditions: A Biography of the Works Through 'Mavra'*, op. cit., p. 1380.

restrictive Western notational figures such as bar lines). Ex. 5.17 is an example of a notated chant that illustrates how the length of each phrase of the znamenny chant is determined purely by how long the verbal phrase it corresponds to lasts (performers are permitted to pause at the end of every sentence/musical phrase). As a result the melodies are inextricably connected to the text and a steady metre is adopted throughout.

Ex. 5.17: Syllabic word-setting and constant rhythm: No. 222 from Uspensky's transcribed znamenny melodies



Further characteristics of liturgical chant are evident in Ustvolskaya's music: in znamenny chant, the free rhythmic values determined by the prose are substantially different to the strongly accented rhythmic lilt of the folksong. The melody frequently proceeds at a steady pace (in what in modern transcription would be rendered as minims).⁴⁹¹ Ustvolskaya's work, of course, is saturated with crotchet pulsation: in her Symphony No. 3, there is no single instance of syncopation. Moreover, the only evidence of notes that are not crotchets, minims or semibreves is found in the oboe texture at Rehearsal 43. Here, despite the triplet configuration conflicting with duplets in the trombone line, the overall effect is still a clearly marked crotchet pulse as the beginning of both the oboe's and trombone's motives are aligned.

Ustvolskaya does not organise her rhythmic lines in the manner of conventional hierarchy, by which the first beat of each bar requires greater emphasis. In the notes to the score of Symphony No. 3, Ustvolskaya reiterates her plea from her previous symphonies that the broken lines that indicate structural organisation are not: 'identical with the bar lines, which are merely intended to facilitate the vertical arrangement of the music'⁴⁹², indicating that

⁴⁹¹ Swan, 'The Znamenny Chant of the Russian Church, Part II', op. cit., p. 368.

⁴⁹² Ustvolskaya, Symphony No. 3, op. cit..

metric hierarchy has been definitively removed and rhythmic freedom prevails, juxtaposed against her obsessive crotchet pulse. Ustvolskaya made her intentions more explicit as she accented the last beat of the 1st oboe part in bar 9, yet did not accent the subsequent note despite its sitting on the first beat of the next bar. Metric equality is also emphasised in 1st oboe in bar 12, where each of the four crotchet beats is accented. The sheer importance of a regular, constant crotchet beat is also illuminated in Symphony No. 5: at every new time signature throughout the work, a marking is inserted to ensure the crotchet beat is not altered.

The obsessive crotchet pulse in Ustvolskaya's music also has further resonance in the repetition that is constantly palpable in Orthodox ritual. The basic structure of the Divine Liturgy is always the same, specific musical expressions being given to each liturgical text as part of a common expression of the Church's theology. There are numerous examples of the prevalence of repetition in the ritual of the Orthodox Church: The Trisagion (sometimes referred to as the *Agios O Theos* – its opening line) is a hymn that is repeated many times in the Byzantine rite; in a baptism, the child experiences a full immersion in water three times (to represent the Holy Trinity) followed by the Priest blowing three times onto the child's head in the form of the Cross; on Easter night, the congregation light candles and walk around the church three times and, upon returning to the church, sing 'Christ is Risen' three times; at a priest's ordination, he will walk around the holy table three times; during a marriage ceremony, the best man will exchange the bride and groom's crowns three times. In Orthodox theology, the repetitive song that accompanies this practice promotes this above-mentioned sense of communal expression, aiding semantic expression and, ultimately, enabling audibility of the prayers. The 'Jesus Prayer' ('Lord Jesus Christ, have mercy on me, a sinner') is perhaps the foremost example of repetition in the daily practice of an Orthodox devotee. Private repetition of this prayer permeates the Orthodox mind and soul, enabling the focus of the faithful to remain on God. This prayer is often accompanied three times by the ritualistic sign of the cross: this prayer has particular significance in monastic life, where it can sometimes be uttered thousands of times a day.

Ustvol'skaya's use of Orthodox chant bestows on her chosen instruments the semantic qualities evoked by the references to the chant and, in exactly the same way, her references to the repetition found in the Orthodox ritual cryptically endows her compositions with an extra-musical function.⁴⁹³ In Orthodox theology, repetition impresses the prayers, faith and practices upon the congregation, and strengthens the power of the request. Moreover, preservation and reiteration of the ancient traditions of the Church is the supreme goal of these repetitions – a proclivity Jonathan Sutton refers to as the 'Theology of Repetition' that is largely responsible for the vast heritage the Orthodox Church offers.⁴⁹⁴ Ustvol'skaya's compulsive repetition also refers, therefore, to the ancient traditions of the church that have been repeated – and therefore preserved – over time.

5.6: Liturgical Meaning

The *znamenny* chant has a highly symbolic nature as it exists as an icon, in a sense, parallel to that of a painted icon, fulfilling a vital role in the liturgy. Florensky discusses the relationship between the Russian Orthodox Church and the prohibition of instruments:

⁴⁹³ Repetition is not only found in the Orthodox Church, but is also commonplace in wider Russian culture, instilling a further sense of Russian identity in Ustvol'skaya's music. For instance in Russian fairy tales, trebling often occurs (e.g. three siblings, three tasks etc.).

⁴⁹⁴ Jonathan Sutton: *Orthodox Christianity and Contemporary Europe* (Leuven: Peeters, 2003), pp. 302–305.

Is it not completely clear to us that the sounds of purely instrumental music – even the sound of the full organ – are wholly alien to an Orthodox liturgical service? Even apart from their role in given composition, such sounds are impossible in an Orthodox Church. This clear impossibility arises directly from our sense of taste, completely apart from any theoretical considerations, because the sounds of instrumental music conflict in our consciousness with the whole system of the Orthodox services, breaking apart their self-integrated wholeness even if we consider the services as merely artistic unities ... For isn't it clear that these sounds taken solely by themselves, are far too remote from precision, the comprehension, the verbal and intellectual energies of the Orthodox services to become the material basis of their sonic art? ... [the] sounds of the organ as too slow, submerged and alien, too engulfed in the darkness of human nature, for the crystalline transparency of Orthodox light.⁴⁹⁵

The prominence given by Ustvolskaya on the text not only incorporates the specific aspect of the *znamenny* chant whereby text is of absolute importance, but also attempts to achieve Florensky's penetrating 'Orthodox light', which, in Orthodox philosophy, can only arise from vocal writing. It is noteworthy that no single Orthodox liturgical service excludes chanting from the ritual. Church singing is regulated, not merely by the text, but by the liturgical function the text fulfils. Singing is an enhancement of the text, but at the same time is *driven* by the text and the liturgical text itself is always of primary importance to the music. The chant forges its role as a vehicle that focuses the congregation on a unified goal: the presence of God. This transformation, which occurs to the faithful during the liturgy, is observed by David Drillock:

A simple table becomes the throne of the Lord, bread and wine are transformed into the very life of Christ, and the syllables that make up our language of communication become words filled with the Holy Spirit. The words that are uttered from our lips are words of the Holy Spirit, words that are spoken of and by God. The Kingdom of God, experienced in the Liturgy, is thus an expression of the divine beauty: singing, hymnography, iconography, ritual, solemnity are all part of what is experienced by the faithful as the epiphany or manifestation of 'heaven on earth.'⁴⁹⁶

⁴⁹⁵ Florensky, op. cit.. p. 65.

⁴⁹⁶ David Drillock, *Music in the Worship of the Church*

<http://theorthodoxresearchinstitute.org/articles/music/drillock_music_in_worship.htm>
(accessed on 01/09/2007).

Drillock also seems to imply that the function of liturgical music is iconographic, a sentiment reinforced by Tatiana Vladyshevskaja's concept of the divinely inspired model, the idea of 'intuitive divine inspiration ... in which the hymns and chants are echoes of the heavenly song of angels, which the prophets gave to the people through a sense of spiritual hearing'.⁴⁹⁷ Although the master icon painters and composers were creative in their arts, there is a prototype in the Orthodox Church that must be adhered to as the cornerstone of the creative process: in the case of liturgical music, it was the compositional rules of the chant that would ultimately lead to communication with God.⁴⁹⁸ This aspect of divine communication provides the basis of the function of liturgical music, and resonates wholly with Ustvolskaya's intentions. Orthodox theology embraces the concept that God initiated a dialogue with man by man's very creation, and his miracles must be responded to appropriately. According to the *New Oxford American Dictionary*, the English word 'liturgy' has its origins in the Greek word for worship – *leitourgia* – meaning common or corporate action: a service or action offered on behalf of people. Liturgical music is thus a community prayer, joining in this dialogue with God.⁴⁹⁹ It is the elevation of the reverential words by their musical enhancement that enables divine communication and, ultimately, a dialogue with God.⁵⁰⁰ Nicolas Schidlovsky provides evidence of an identical attitude in the Byzantine tradition:

In liturgy, the silence of sanctuary is broken; the expectation of mystery is fulfilled. Sounds burst forth. The Word is proclaimed. The faithful enter the kingdom. ... Music is an expression of this splendid, joyous reality, part of the sacrament event. It is bountiful evidence of the fact that everything is sanctified.

⁴⁹⁷ Tatiana Vladyshevskaja, William C. Brumfield, Milos M. Velimirovic eds., 'On the Links Between Music and Icon Painting in Medieval Rus', *Christianity and the Arts in Russia* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1991), p. 18.

⁴⁹⁸ Bishop Tikhon (Fitzgerald), 'On Church Singing', *The Orthodox West: The Journal of the Diocese of the West/Autocephalous Orthodox Church in America*, (Spring/Summer, 1994), p. 11.

⁴⁹⁹ Angus Stevenson, Christina A. Lindberg eds., *New Oxford American Dictionary* (USA: Oxford University Press, 2011).

⁵⁰⁰ Nicolas Schidlovsky, Gordon D. McQuere ed., 'Sources of Russian Chant Theory', *Russian Theoretical Thought in Music* (Michigan: UMI Research Press, 1983).

Schidlovsky continues by representing Byzantine chant as an educative tool for instructing the congregation in the correct theological fashion, whilst simultaneously preserving acceptable teachings and practices.

The chant is essentially part of the ritualistic aspect of the liturgy, sometimes accompanying liturgical actions but emphatically serving as communication with the divine. The monophonic chant, although a musical mutation, preserves the functionality of the Byzantine tradition: the music not meant for aesthetic pleasure, but has a utilitarian function as a conduit between Man and God of the expressed text. When Ustvolskaya's music is viewed as a further mutation of the chant, this unspoken liturgical function is revealed, despite its removal from a conventional liturgical setting.

A further liturgical resonance between Ustvolskaya and znamenny practice is the chant's liturgical purpose as a component to a larger structure (a tone is an element of a hymn, a hymn is an element of a divine service, a divine service is an element of a diurnal liturgical cycle, which in turn is an element of a weekly liturgical cycle that presents an element of a years' cycle of feasts), underpinning the fashion of Ustvolskaya's works in which each piece is often an element of a wider statement. Her Compositions, for example, exist as a religiously explicit trilogy and her final three Symphonies comprise variations of the same text. The religious subtitles of her last four Symphonies encompass a narrative of their own: from a time before the disruption perpetrated by the sin of Man in *True and Eternal Bliss*, the consequent pleading of humanity for redemption in *Jesus, Messiah, Save us!*, a more peaceful prayer from the individual in Symphony No. 4 and a culminating ever-resonating *Amen*, Ustvolskaya's final statement on the eternal power of God.

In her article 'On the Links Between Music and Icon Painting in Medieval Rus' Vladyshevskaja observes the amalgamation of all the arts in the Russian Orthodox theology into a single act of worship, highlighting icon painting and music as the most important as their respective creators embodied fundamental theological ideas and ultimately 'form[ed] the pulse of ancient Russian culture, defining the spiritual character of Rus'.⁵⁰¹ Bearing this in mind, Orthodox chant suddenly attains a quality quite beyond its sonic

⁵⁰¹ Vladyshevskaja, op. cit., pp. 14–32.

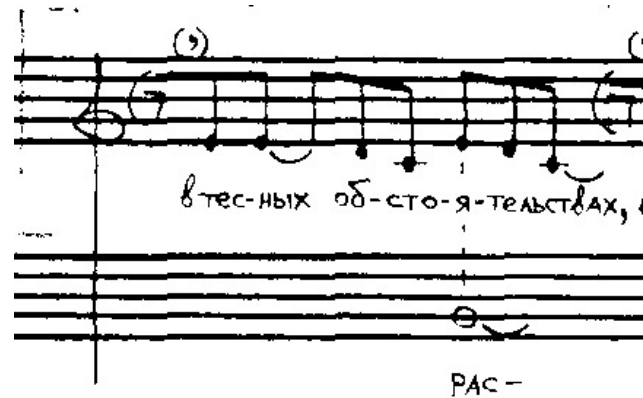
properties: a literal spiritual window to the heavenly realms with the ability to instigate divine communication itself (a feature often attributed to the painted icons, but rarely applied to the music). In effect, Orthodox music is itself regarded as incorporating iconic properties. This in turn thrusts Ustvolskaya's music into the transcendental position of an iconic existence. Her implementation of the chant should not be regarded as a mere reference; instead, Ustvolskaya invites the audience to receive her music in the context of this profound liturgical function.

5.7: Hidden Meanings/Cryptography

It has been ascertained that Ustvolskaya's motivation is irrefutably indebted to the words, as prodigious emphasis surrounds the content of her chosen text. This enthusiasm for including text is not only matched by Orthodox liturgical practice, but can also be seen in the work of other Russian/ex-Soviet twentieth-century composers. The illustration in Illus. 5.18 is taken from Knaifel's work *Snowflake on a Spiderthread (Time Behold Now)* (1998) for cello solo. The text behind the work is enclosed as a preface to the score: the first poem is created by Knaifel himself, the second is a quotation from the second epistle of Paul to the Corinthians, Chapter 6. Verses 2–11. These texts feature throughout the entire score written alongside the cello part as if they were a vocal line. However, Knaifel instructs the cellist to consider the chosen text without actually ever uttering them, as the words precisely correlate with the musical line. For example, the musical line aptly descends into a lower register in correspondence with the text: '*V tesnikh obstoyatelstvakh*' [in the condition of wanting]. There are breath marks in the cello line – also to be envisioned – that correlate appropriately with both the cello melody and the text. This example of the absolute supremacy of the text appositely replicates the general importance of text in Ustvolskaya's work, again emphasising the superlative value of the selected text in the context of the entire musical material. This, once more, accentuates the impact of Musorgsky's nationalistic syllabic and

naturally stressed word setting not only on Ustvolskaya but many twentieth-century Russian composers.

Illus. 5.18: Knaifel's 'word setting' for cellist in *Time Behold Now (Snowflake on a Spider's Thread)*



A further example of the same technique is Knaifel's *Psalm 51* (1995) for solo cello, in which the composer syllabically sets the unuttered text. This piece is exceptionally significant as the melodic line resonates entirely with znamenny practice: metric freedom prevails (as no bar lines are indicated), the melody frequently proceeds in stepwise movement (resulting in numerous examples of tone and semitone configurations), and the length of each musical line is determined purely by how long the spoken phrase lasts. Knaifel's technique succinctly reveals exactly to what extent his musical structure is wholly dependent upon the text: in sum, the instruments themselves represent the unspoken text through their musical conveyance. The instruments assume their own individual personalities, conveying specific semantic content behind the music's façade. Although Ustvolskaya does not include an unspoken poem as a preface, her compositional realisation of characteristics of znamenny chant serves an analogous purpose, adopting the role of the chant in its iconic form and ultimately providing a route through which the listener can access their spiritual consciousness: the chant itself no longer exists merely as a melody in the context of her music, but adopts a linguistic – or vocal – function of its own, replete with cryptographic text. It is largely attributable to the ambiguous nature of music's interpretation that the znamenny chant was drawn upon as a

tool for communicating clandestine ‘spiritual’ messages. By utilising aspects of the znamenny chant, composers could largely conform to the regime’s authoritarian demands, whilst not surrendering their own artistic convictions.

Aside from the numerical symbolism identified in Chapter 2, further hidden meanings can be found in Ustvol’skaya’s work through her deployment of hidden monograms: Ivashkin notes varying spellings of the word ‘Deus’, imparted in her Fifth Piano Sonata (where it is spelt D♭ [Des] by obsessively repetitive D♭ impulses) and Composition No. 1 (where it is spelt D, E, E♭ [Es]). In her subsequent Composition, the Italian word *gastigo* [punishment] is presented with the prominent motif G, A♭ (As) and in her final Composition No. 3, Ustvol’skaya portrays the seven trumpets of the Last Judgement by repeating an F♯ (F[i]s) seven times, suggesting the Latin word *fistula* (trumpet).⁵⁰²

5.8: The Sacred as Folk

The long and complex history of the znamenny chant takes on an augmented significance when one considers the influences that altered the original Byzantine chant to make it uniquely Russian. Maxim Brazhnikov contemplates this complex and antiquated process: ‘Znamenny chant – was in the long past derived from Byzantium, but no sooner on Russian soil than it encountered an entirely new medium – the musical perception of the Russian people, its whole culture and custom, and thus began its second life in Russia’.⁵⁰³ Indeed, it is both significant and wholly unique to Russian culture that so many national folksongs are so similar – if not identical – to melodic lines of the znamenny,

⁵⁰² Tamara Levaya, ‘Sakralnaya simbolika v zhanrakh instrumental’nogo tvorchestva. Galina Ustvol’skaya’ [‘Sacred symbolism in the genres of the instrumental music of Galina Ustvol’skaya’], *Istoria otechestvennoi muzyki vtoroi poloviny XX veka* [History of Russian Music of the Second Half of the Twentieth Century] (St Petersburg: Kompozitor, 2005), p. 403. Ivashkin, *Symbols, Metaphors and Irrationalities in Twentieth-Century Music*, op. cit..

⁵⁰³ Brazhnikov, op. cit.. Swan offers a second opinion, emphasising that znamenny chant, despite its roots, must not be considered merely as analogous to Gregorian, Byzantine and Ambrosian liturgical practices, but particular significance must be drawn to its relationship with Russian folk music and consequent ‘Russian character’. Swan, *Russian Music: and its Sources in Folk-Song*, op. cit., p. 38.

Orthodox chant. Russian folk songs in the tenth to seventeenth centuries were always based upon this Znamenny Tone, as was the music for the church. So, for the most part, folk music equated to the very same substance as sacred: and the sacred, folk.⁵⁰⁴

For now, at least, it is difficult to ascertain exactly to what extent Byzantine liturgical chant was adapted following its encounter with Russian folklore, although it is widely acknowledged as such.⁵⁰⁵ Communities of Old Believers do often maintain that znamenny chant encountered very little adaptation imposed by its contact with folk music, but as the differences between znamenny chant and its origins in Byzantine liturgical music are contemplated, it becomes very difficult to give any credit to this idea. There certainly is some evidence that communities of Old Believers have been obliged to adapt to cultural forces perhaps more than they admit, seen clearly through the role of women in the Orthodox service. Until the early 1900s women were not allowed to sing in the *kleros* of the church, but when many of the men were forced to join the army, women adopted their role in the *kleros* permanently. This is one sociological issue that we can be sure led to adaptation within the Orthodox community, proving that traditions are constantly faced with various obstacles, and resultant adaptations are inevitable. It is therefore highly likely that the music has also faced some amount of modification over the years. What remains undisputed is the emphasis Old Believers place on the primary position of znamenny chant in terms of everyday life in history. Daily these melodies would be heard in every divine service, listened to by everyone and, likewise, memorised by all.⁵⁰⁶ Znamenny raspev and Russian folk music are deeply connected parallel branches of music.

⁵⁰⁴ The emergence of polyphony in Russian Orthodox Church music also had its roots in folksong. For a comprehensive account of polyphony in Russian folksong see: Anna Rudneva, *Russkoe narodnoe muzykalnoe tvorchestvo: ocherki po teorii folkloru* [*Russian Church Music: Sketches of the Theory of Folklore*] (Moscow: Izdatelskoe obединenie 'Kompozitor', 1994), pp. 138–157).

⁵⁰⁵ Moody, 'Music in the Orthodox Church', op. cit., p. 539–540.

⁵⁰⁶ In conversation with Simmons, Joensuu, 06/06/2007.

This amalgamation of *znamenny raspev* and Western music genres continued into the early years of the twentieth century, establishing a system that introduced ‘Russianness’ to an institution already dominated by Western European music. The use of folk ritual has also been a constant element of the identity of Russian art music’ as can be seen in Musorgsky’s choruses (*Boris Godunov* (1868–1873), *Khovanshchina*), in Tchaikovsky’s orchestral works, and in the more fragmented melodic aspects of Stravinsky’s writing (*Svadebka*). Whether composers seized direct examples of the chant, or approached it with a more archaic method, there are numerous examples of composers grasping the ancient icon and exploiting the rudiments of the chant in order to generate new musical ideas and approaches. Tchaikovsky included *znamenny* melodies in many of his secular works including his Symphony No. 6 (1893) and *The Queen of Spades* (1890), and Rimsky-Korsakov composed his *Russian Easter Festival Overture* (also known as The Great Russian Easter Overture) op. 36 in 1887–1888, basing it largely on the *Obikhod*⁵⁰⁸ and including several biblical quotes in the score itself. Rimsky-Korsakov himself explicitly outlined his personal intent with the symphony in his autobiography:

The rather lengthy, slow introduction of the Easter Sunday Overture is the theme of ‘Let God Arise!’ alternating with the ecclesiastical theme ‘An Angel Wailed’, appeared to me, in its beginning, as it were, the ancient Isaiah’s prophecy concerning the resurrection of Christ. The gloomy colours of the *Andante lugubre* seemed to depict the Holy Sepulchre that had shone with ineffable light at the moment of resurrection – in the transition to the Allegro of the Overture. The beginning of the *Allegro* ‘Let them also that hate flee before Him’ led to the holiday mood of the Greek Orthodox Church service on Christ’s matins; the solemn trumpet voice of the archangel was replaced by a tonal reproduction of the joyous almost dance-like bell-tolling, alternating now with the sexton’s rapid reading and now with the conventional chant of the priest’s reading the glad tidings of the Evangel. The *obikhod* theme, ‘Christ is Risen!’ which forms a sort of subsidiary part of the Overture appeared amongst the trumpet-blasts and bell-tolling, constituting a triumphant coda.⁵⁰⁹

⁵⁰⁸ The term *Obikhod* refers to a collection of chants that is associated with Russian Orthodox chant, including not only *znamenny* chant, but also Bulgarian and Eastern Ukrainian chant and all chants from the region anciently known as Rus.

⁵⁰⁹ Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov, *My Musical Life* (Holt: Tudor Publishing, 1956), p. 293.

The clear pagan element of Rimsky-Korsakov's overture may well be indebted to his own personal religious convictions: he was not a Christian believer.⁵¹⁰ However, it does seem unusual that a non-believer would compose a piece purely based upon liturgical chant, replete with direct quotations and with a subject matter that forms the basis of Christianity; he even included the 68th Psalm and the 16th chapter of Mark's Gospel in his preface to the score. Despite including in this preface some of his own words that were in keeping with his more pantheistic attitude, Rimsky-Korsakov's subject matter is hugely indicative of a further relevant aspect of the Russian creative mentality: Russian Orthodoxy as Russian nationalism.

Rachmaninov's *Liturgy of Saint John Chrysostom* (opus. 31, 1910), was followed by his *All Night Vigil* (1915), in which he drew upon several Orthodox chants (including znamenny) to compose a cycle of fifteen liturgical settings for choir (Ex. 5.20 and Ex. 5.21).⁵¹¹

Ex. 5.20: Original znamenny chant used by Rachmaninov



⁵¹⁰ Although it is worthy of note that Rimsky-Korsakov also wrote church music to use for the liturgy.

⁵¹¹ Alfred J. Swan, 'Russian liturgical music and its relation to twentieth-century ideals', *Music and Letters* Vol. 39, No. 3 (1958), p. 271.

Ex. 5.21: No. 12 from Rachmaninov's *All Night Vigil*, bars 1–6

Poco allegro, (*alla breve*)

SOPRANO

ALTO

TENOR

BASS

S.

A.

T.

B.

Shostakovich, the foremost Soviet composer in terms of covert expression, also occasionally looked to *znamenny raspev* as a means to escape the extremist ideology with which he was forced to comply. Take, for example, his *Song for Stalin* (1949) in which, despite the caution he was compelled to demonstrate publicly following the 1936 attacks, his covert allusion to *znamenny raspev* is never more evident (Ex. 5.22).⁵¹² Shostakovich's compositional approaches would have had a profound effect on Ustvolskaya during this period as she was his student, colleague and close friend.

Ex. 5.22: Shostakovich's *Song for Stalin* (1949)

f

Sta - li - nu - cla - va! Na - vye - ki on vye - ryen -

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⁵¹² Alexander Ivashkin, *Shostakovich, First Russian Minimalist*, paper delivered at the Shostakovich Symposium, Rutgers University, USA on 14/04/2006, also published in: Alexander Ivashkin, *Dvoynaya pererabotka otkhodov v sovetskoy muzyke* [Double recycling in Soviet Music] *Iskusstvo XX veka: elita i massy* (Russia: Nizhny Novgorod, 2005), pp. 12–15.

Furthermore, Schnittke was also to allude to the *znamenny raspev* in his film-score *Dnevnye zvyozdy* (Day Stars)⁵¹³, which subject concerned the life of Ivan the Terrible (reverberating with Prokofiev's quasi-*znamenny* inclusions for Eisenstein's celebrated film). Although no direct quotation has been identified in the soundtrack, some melodic and rhythmic similarities have been traced to fragments from the collection of chants transcribed by Uspensky. The presence of Schnittke's *znamenny* melodies accompanies Ivan's son's murder and it was to be this very same material that Schnittke was to include in Hymn No. 3 (1979), from the set *Four Hymns* for cello and chamber ensemble.

The implementation of the chant takes on an additional cultural and historical value when the entire Russian music canon is surveyed. The supremacy of *znamenny raspev* in Ustvolskaya's music can thus be seen as a continuation of an exclusively *Russian* phenomenon, although one secondary to the ancient roots to which she was remaining true. As Ustvolskaya offers no personal explication of her motivations, it is necessary to turn to the testaments of others who endorsed the movement. Dmitri Razumovsky (1818–1889) – when appointed Professor at the Moscow Conservatory – established a tradition for the study of church singing, a convention that Smolensky consummately continued with the support of his youthful contemporary, Kastalsky. Kastalsky and Smolensky – through the latter's extensive ethnographical research of this ancient music – were inspired to pursue and launch a new model of liturgical music wholly based upon the ancient practice of Russian chant. Thus the New Antiquity (the idea of the reconstruction of the ancient in the Modern) was founded, renovating the obsolete chant as a modern ideal.⁵¹⁴ Kastalsky's motivation for supporting this movement is here outlined:

⁵¹³ Directed by Igor Talankin, 1966.

⁵¹⁴ Svetlana Zvereva, *Alexander Kastalsky: His Life and Music* (London: Ashgate Publishing, 2003), p. 57.

If we fall into the present-day tendency to create music that is too complex, for the sake of sound effects that are fashionable, then it will lead only to the fact that church music will become the same as secular music – only with sacred text ... Our indigenous church melodies when set chorally lose all their individuality: how distinctive they are when sung in unison by the Old Believers, and how insipid they are in the conventional four-part arrangements of our classic composers, on which we have prided ourselves for nearly a hundred years; it is touching, but spurious ... The future of our creative work for the church should be to get away from continual four-part writing ... I should like to have a music that could be heard nowhere except in a church, and which would be as distinct from secular music as church vestments are from the dress of the laity.⁵¹⁵

Kastalsky's comments may be considered entirely congruous with the motivations behind Ustvolskaya's implementation of the *znamenny* chant: after all, her attraction to the *distinctive unison* melodies of the Old Believers is undisputed. The quasi-minimalist *simplicity* with which Ustvolskaya sets the chant adheres to Kastalsky's aversion to the *fashionable sound effects* of the twentieth century, and her assured instructions that her compositions are best suited to performance in a church resonate entirely with Kastalsky's musical ideals. However, Kastalsky's elevation of the original chant demonstrates that Ustvolskaya's reference to her Byzantine roots must not be negated by a classification in terms of Russian music traditions: it is simply not the case that Ustvolskaya's inclusion of *znamenny* chant was merely a reference to nineteenth-century compositional practice, although this connection is beneficial for verifying her music in the context of the Russian musical line.

5.10: Ustvolskaya, Znamenny Raspev and Stravinsky

The twentieth century saw the implementation of *znamenny* chant as an emblem of Russian nationalism in music, as Stravinsky took up the baton from the tradition Musorgsky established. In terms of explicitly religious music,

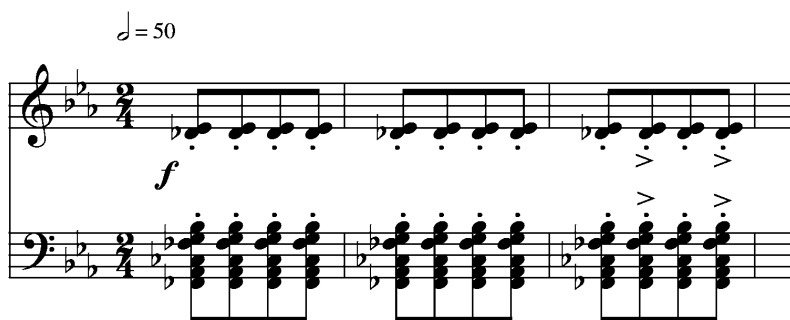
⁵¹⁵ English translation taken from A. Kastalsky, trans. S. W. Pring, 'My Musical Career and my Thoughts on Church Music', *The Musical Quarterly*, Vol 11, No. 2 (1925), pp. 238–245 and Unknown author, *Words and Music in Orthodox Worship* <<http://liturgica.com/html/litEOLitMusDev3.jsp?hostname=null#nationalism>> (accessed on 02/02/2008).

Stravinsky included directly melodies from the znamenny tradition in his *Russian Church Choruses* (1926–1934), and the soprano line of his *Otche Nash* (Pater Noster) is freely based on the traditional znamenny melody for the Lord’s Prayer.⁵¹⁶ The composition of the *Choruses* could well have been motivated by Stravinsky’s confession and communion into the Orthodox Church in the same year, after which he remained a dedicated follower. But it is not only this liturgical music that includes references to the znamenny tradition: Stravinsky also uses znamenny techniques to convey the ideas of Russianness and ‘the folk’ that saturated his early work. This chapter has already explored the melodic links between *Svadebka* and znamenny but there are also harmonic/melodic connections. Take, for example, the famous brass chord that rhythmically articulates the ‘Augurs of Spring’ in *The Rite of Spring* is a further example of Ustvolskaya’s harmonic approach resonating with that of Stravinsky. Indeed, the renowned bitonal chord can be analysed in terms of the T–ST chord previously identified (if the D \flat is considered enharmonically): A \flat –B \flat –C \flat –D \flat : D \flat –E \flat –F \flat –G.

Rhythmically, there are further connections: The *Danses des Adolescentes* at the beginning of *The Rite of Spring* palpably prophesies Ustvolskaya’s ‘timeless’ pulsations with irregular accents (Ex. 5.23). Even the most esoteric levels of *The Rite of Spring* are manipulated by folk material; the entire subject matter of this work is, of course, a pagan ritual concerning the sacrifice of a young maiden who, only through dancing herself to death, can inaugurate spring. The irregular recurrence of quaver beats in Grand Duet is redolent of *The Rite of Spring*, invoking similar ideas of primitive ritualism as it combines metric and ametric rhythms, manipulating the subjective expectation of the listener (Ex. 5.24). These crotchet pulsations also resonate with other Western composers, as others also attempted to break with tradition, and include them in ceremonial aspects of their music. The rhythmic technique can be identified in Boulez’s ceremonial *Rituel* (1974–75), while the crotchet pulse established by Béla Bartók (1881–1945) during the opening of his First Piano Concerto (1926) is distinctly reminiscent of the ritualistic pulsating of much of Ustvolskaya’s work.

⁵¹⁶ This inclusion also assimilates Stravinsky’s Eurasian inclusion of aspects of Russian folksong (Chapter 4.21).

Ex. 5.23: Igor Stravinsky 'The Augurs of Spring' from *The Rite of Spring*, rehearsal no. 13



Ex. 5.24: Grand Duet for Cello and Piano, Mvt 1, Figure 17



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The musical language employed is not, however, where this comparison between Ustvolskaya and Stravinsky ends. The semantic content of this work, of course, contains recognised references to nature and the ceremonial aspects of the subject matter are inescapable: the dance is placed subsequent to the opening 'L'Adoration de la terre' [adoration of the earth] and introduces the scene of the sacrificial virgin.

The musical similarities between Ustvolskaya and Stravinsky is never more apparent than the opening of the final movement of Ustvolskaya's Symphony No. 1 (1955), which has its roots in Stravinsky's *Symphony of Psalms*. This piece would have been played to Ustvolskaya during her composition classes with Shostakovich, who had created a piano reduction for teaching purposes. Frans C. Lemaire illuminates the connection between this finale and the fugue of Stravinsky's second movement. But this is where the correlation between these two works ends: Symphony No. 1 offers an inversion

of Stravinsky's joyful *Symphony of Psalms* as it functions as a narration of the misery of human life:

Ustvol'skaya provides us with something of a social, laic and even political antithesis of Stravinsky's purely religious approach. Stravinsky's score even uses the words 'composed to the glory of God.' The reverse of a song of praise, Ustvol'skaya's *Symphony of lamentations* is a private playground for human misery and, worse still, for innocent children, which reminds us of Dostoyevski's protestation.⁵¹⁷

It is clear there are numerous connections between Ustvol'skaya's and Stravinsky's compositional language: Rhythmic (*Grand Duet/The Rite*), melodic (*Symphony No. 1/Symphony of Psalms*), harmonic (Taruskin's tri-chordic analysis), structurally (block form, Chapter 3), ceremonial, and philosophical (see Eurasianism/Cubism, Chapter 3). This connection becomes of further note when one considers Ustvol'skaya's attitude to Stravinsky's writing. According to Bagrenin, Ustvol'skaya was fond of only one passage of Stravinsky's music at the end of *The Rite of Spring*.⁵¹⁸ It is hugely significant that Ustvol'skaya liked this, as she only expressed her approval of very few pieces of music.

Musorgsky and, later, Stravinsky,⁵¹⁹ comprise a large part of Ustvol'skaya's heritage and ultimately provided her with the compositional tools through which to continue this markedly Russian compositional method, whilst simultaneously remaining true to the ancient roots of the Old Believers. The inclusion of aspects of folklore does create the sense of 'otherness' in Ustvol'skaya's music (as well as contributing to the sense of communal expression), but perhaps this is not so distant a technique as initially presumed when one considers the twentieth-century activity of neighbouring Eastern European composers (such as Bartók, Kodály, Ligeti, Kurtág, and Xenakis) who were extensively exploring and elevating their respective national roots.⁵²⁰

⁵¹⁷ Lemaire, CD liner notes: *Galina Ustvol'skaya: Piano Concerto/Symphony I*, Oleg Malov, The Ural Philharmonic Orchestra and Dmitri Liss, Megadisc Classics, MDC 7856, St Petersburg, 2000.

⁵¹⁸ Bagrenin, via e-mail, translated and received via Bakhmin, 09/06/2010.

⁵¹⁹ Despite Ustvol'skaya's personal denunciation of him, Shostakovich could also be added to this line, particularly in light of his influence over Ustvol'skaya during the earliest part of her career.

⁵²⁰ An exploration of the compositional activity in neighbouring Eastern European countries with a view to compare it to Ustvol'skaya's, presents a potentially worthwhile future line of

With this in mind, Musorgsky's ideas thrust him clearly into the role of a progressive, prophesying values that would be widely upheld in the twentieth century. In terms of the music of Ustvolskaya, her inclusion of folk traditions drive her deep amongst the traditions and ideas being explored in Western music despite the geopolitical isolation imposed – as well as *Eastern* musical elements explored – during these years.

The examination of the journey of the *znamenny raspev* reveals the musical building blocks available for Ustvolskaya's use, which – in terms of the Russian art music tradition – was delivered to her from Musorgsky, via Stravinsky. It is because of the deep-rooted connection between *znamenny raspev* and Russian folk song that a parallel between Stravinsky's and Ustvolskaya's compositional practice is so strong. As a result of the execution of these compositional approaches, distinct musical links can be established between these prolific composers.

5.11: Final Thoughts: An Esoteric Orthodoxy

Although various characteristics of Russian Orthodox liturgical chant have been identified in Ustvolskaya's music, a final enquiry must consider the *purpose* of this palpable inclusion. The political and social situation within which Ustvolskaya was composing is of particular note, as her creative productivity was constantly observed and publicly scrutinised. Without the freedom to publish music that would overtly convey her personal spiritual convictions, Ustvolskaya was compelled to acquire a compositional approach that could release her from her artistic shackles. Her inclusion of *znamenny* chant provided a route through which she could explore her spiritual fervour amid twentieth-century politics discretely, in a private manner. An examination of Ustvolskaya's contemporaries shows a lengthy and widespread preoccupation with this approach, suggesting that the *znamenny raspev* is a

enquiry. However, with no evidence that Ustvolskaya ever had access to scores of composers such as Bartók, Kodály, Ligeti, Kurtág, Penderecki, Górecki, Szymanowski, Lutosławski, or indeed ever heard their music, such an investigation is beyond the scope of this thesis. The author, however, intends this to be the subject of future publications.

major consideration in the analysis of twentieth-century Russian composers. This common practice not only possessed the ability to communicate clandestine spiritual messages but also characterised a sense of national identity as a return to Byzantine roots. The emblem of the *znamenny raspev* also represents the East in a way that, when employed in the context of the western art music tradition, retains aspects of an oriental identity.

Despite this location of Ustvolskaya in terms of an historic narrative, it is commonly reported that Ustvolskaya did not wish for such comparisons to take place: it has already been observed that she was notorious for her hermitic living and self-imposed ostracism from the St Petersburg composing community. With this in mind it is hardly likely that it was her intention to ‘jump on the bandwagon’ and unite with her contemporaries in a common pursuit. In fact, it seems more likely that her inclusion of *znamenny raspev* stems from her personal *rejection* of the inclinations, compromises and fads emblematic of a composer’s personal journey amidst the cultural norm. Indeed, Ustvolskaya’s music demonstrates that musical answers cannot be discovered through cultural traditions (or, as she may have viewed it, cultural corruption), but only through a combination of established history and contemporary thought can one progress musically within the realms of the excessive aesthetic restrictions such as she experienced.

It has also been demonstrated, however, that the embracing of Byzantine roots is not a practice followed solely in Russia. The historic narrative of the Byzantine chant reveals exactly why a striking correspondence can be claimed between the music of Ustvolskaya and of Xenakis. Neither Greece nor Russia has a long established history of western art music, yet both possess a thriving – and ancient – culture of folklore and Orthodox Church music. The inclusion of Orthodox chant, for Ustvolskaya, Xenakis and Stravinsky alike, enabled them to progress within the realms of western art music whilst remaining true to the significant values evident in their respective cultures: ultimately locating all three composers in the context of both Eastern and Western traditions. Each used the context of their own culture – about which all were clearly passionate – to experiment with a new musical language. It is this deep emotional connection with their ancient roots that provides them both with the ability to

capture a certain sobering severity. Xenakis summarises his rejection of German music through this quest for identity:

I was looking for a music that would correspond with my ideas about ancient civilisation ... when I first heard Debussy ... I felt his music was closest to what I was searching for. More than Bach, Mozart, Beethoven or Brahms. Later on, when I was trying to find my identity and my Greek origins suddenly became important to me, the example of Mussorgsky and Bartók warned me that I had to understand and love Greek folk music ... That was when I returned to the basic experiences of my youth.⁵²¹

Messiaen embraced a similar idea: in the first chapter of his treatise *The Technique of My Musical Language*, entitled ‘The Charm of Impossibilities and the Relation of the Different Subject Matters’, he immediately articulates his sense of musical heritage:

We shall not reject the old rules of harmony and form; let us remember them constantly, whether to observe them, or to augment them, or to add to them some others still older (those of plainchant or Hindu rhythmic) or more recent (those suggested by Debussy and all contemporary music). One point will attract our attention at the outset: the *charm of impossibilities*.⁵²²

As Ustvolskaya is mostly silent on the subject, it is other composers’ explanations as to their motivations that can provide us with clarity of insight into our understanding of Ustvolskaya’s own ideas.

⁵²¹ Bálint András Varga, *Conversations with Iannis Xenakis* (London: Faber and Faber, 1996), pp. 51–52.

⁵²² Olivier Messiaen, trans. John Satterfield, *The Technique of my Musical Language* (Paris: Alphonse Leduc, 1956), p. 6.

An Unlikely Shade of Red: The Forgotten Works

Chapter 6

Despite the spiritual integrity for which she was renowned later in her life, Ustvolskaya would have been acutely aware that a public presentation of some of her more private works would not have been well received by the Soviet authorities: they were not in concordance with their ideological demands. It is therefore necessary to offer, by some way of explanation as to the personal and political pressure that she and her contemporaries were under during the years of Soviet control, an overview of official requirements, and the impact this would have on the composing community. The official works that Ustvolskaya composed during the earliest part of her career are hugely important when it comes to considering the position of the composer in the Soviet Union, as well as understanding the forces and influences imposed on Ustvolskaya throughout her lifetime. By considering the status of music during the Soviet era, we may arrive at an understanding of many of the inhibitions (and even motivations) that surround Ustvolskaya's work.

During the years immediately following the revolution there was confusion as to exactly what constituted the proletarianisation of music. The New Economic Policy (NEP) introduced in 1921 saw an improvement in economic conditions, a relaxation of ideological tensions, a thriving musical scene and a 'greater permissiveness in matters of musical taste and style.'⁵²³ Concerts of contemporary music were held in St Petersburg and Moscow (the World Art Group-sponsored concerts in St Petersburg presented music by Mahler, Strauss, Ravel, Scriabin and Rachmaninov) and foreign artists and foreign composers (such as Hindemith, Darius Milhaud (1892–1974) and Franz Schreker (1878–1934)) were invited to perform in Russia during this period.⁵²⁴ The Association of Contemporary Music (ACM) was established in Moscow in 1923. This organisation even served as the Russian branch of the International

⁵²³ Schwarz, op. cit., p. 43.

⁵²⁴ Anna Ferenc, Neil Edmunds ed., 'Music in the Socialist State', *Soviet Music and Society Under Lenin and Stalin: The Baton and the Sickle* (London, New York: Routledge Curzon: 2004), pp. 8–9.

Society of Contemporary Music (ISCM), promoting contemporary Russian works internationally, speaking for highly trained, progressive musicians. The figures involved in this organisation included Nikolai Myakovsky (1881–1950), Pavel Lamm (1882–1951), Samuil Feinberg (1890–1962) and Leonid Sabaneev (1881–1968) who, in turn, would influence the next generation of Soviet composers (such as Shebalin and, significantly in terms of Ustvolskaya, Shostakovich) as they assumed professorial positions in conservatories, as well as positions of authority in state agencies.⁵²⁵ This represents one angle of musical life during these years but, at the same time, a different vein of musical thinking began to emerge which was more in sympathy with the party line. Anna Ferenc offers an explanation for these developments:

...by the end of the decade, a distinctly less modernist, more proletarian-oriented stance began to dominate the musical arena. This and other developments during the period can best be understood in terms of existing factions in the musical community, their competitive attempts to provide the new social order with an appropriate cultural response, and the changing political strengths of players in key administrative positions committed to particular aesthetic platforms. The definition and implementation of an ideologically correct musical agenda was debated vehemently throughout the 1920s. But these polemical battles essentially propagated factionalism that arose during the civil war.⁵²⁶

In 1923 the Association of Proletarian Musicians⁵²⁷ was established. Members advocated music that was accessible and ‘ideologically clear in the manner of revolutionary songs and mass choruses...firmly set against...modernism and rejected cultivation of any ties with the West.’⁵²⁸ Furthermore, members accused those loyal to the ACM as decadent, bourgeois and formalist. Ideological debates continued until, in 1929, the ACM discontinued all activities. Guidance as to the direction Soviet music should now take came with the Party resolution from 23rd April 1932 ‘On the Reformation of Literary and Artistic Organisations’.⁵²⁹ This outlined the creed of socialist realism and

⁵²⁵ Ferenc, *ibid.*, p. 11.

⁵²⁶ Ferenc, *ibid.*, p. 9.

⁵²⁷ Later the Russian Association of Proletariat Musicians, or RAPM.

⁵²⁸ Ferenc, *ibid.*, p. 12.

⁵²⁹ Marina Frolova-Walker, Jonathan Walker, *Music and Soviet Power: 1917-1932* (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2012), pp. 324–325.

recommended the representation of ‘revolutionary development’ essentially ending all relaxation in artistic affairs that the 1920s permitted.⁵³⁰

Shostakovich is the foremost of composers who was educated in the Soviet system, and his musical versatility served as a great advantage during these early years. Ferenc highlights how the masterful Shostakovich paid homage to both veins of musical developments in the 1920s: on one hand, the innovation of his compositional language can be seen in compositions such as the satirical *The Nose* (1928) while, at the same time, his Second Symphony (1927) was written to commemorate the tenth anniversary of the revolution and was dedicated ‘To October’, and his Third Symphony (1929) was entitled ‘The First of May’.⁵³¹ Famously, Shostakovich’s second opera *Lady Macbeth of Mtsenk* (1930–1932) was condemned by *Pravda* in an article entitled ‘Muddle instead of Music’, despite originally being premiered to great critical acclaim. Following the *Pravda* article, several reviewers who had previously admired the opera criticised the work in different publications.⁵³² Shostakovich’s opera was removed from the stage and replaced with the uncomplicated opera *The Quiet Don* (1935) by Ivan Dzerzhinsky (1909–1978). This work, approved by Stalin, was simple and included melodies of revolutionary songs. This socialist realist style began to dominate the cultural stage: safe conservatism, tonal symphonies, descriptive tone poems, uncomplicated vocal passages, patriotic subject matters, large-scale symphonic forms, and elements of indigenous folk music and genres became indispensable tools to the Soviet composer.

Despite a period of relaxation appearing once more during the German invasion of the Soviet Union in 1941, an even harsher ideological campaign was to strike composers from 1946–48 under the control of Andrei Zhdanov (1896–1948) (see Chapter 6.1).⁵³³ This tightened control on artistic output to an even greater degree:

⁵³⁰ Ferenc, op. cit., pp. 12–13.

⁵³¹ Ferenc, *ibid.*, p. 14.

⁵³² Elizabeth Wilson, *Shostakovich: A Life Remembered*, op. cit., pp. 127–144.

⁵³³ Meri E. Herralá, *The Struggle for Control of Soviet Music From 1932 to 1948: Socialist Realism vs. Western Formalism* (Lewiston, Queenstone, Lampeter: The Edwin Mellen Press, 2012), pp. 14–19.

During this period of *zhdanovschina*, the cultural policies in the 1930s were revisited and so militarily enforced that they remained intact even after Zhdanov's unexpected death in August 1948. Particularly objectionable, from the Party's view-point, was the prevalence after the war of non-programmatic instrumental music at the expense of vocal genres. This trend towards the abstract in music was deemed antithetical to the aesthetic needs of the people. Such critically independent and ideologically misguided expressions as Shostakovich's latest symphonies were unacceptable.⁵³⁴

Unsurprisingly, perhaps, Zhdanov's decree 'initiated a musical witch-hunt and stifled creativity. It also exposed the cultural policy of the Soviet Union to 'world-wide ridicule and contempt.'⁵³⁵ It is important to note that Zhdanov's decree coincided with Ustvol'skaya's graduation from the conservatory and admittance into the Composers' Union. 1948 also saw Ustvol'skaya beginning her thirty-year teaching career at the Leningrad Rimsky-Korsakov College of Music. At the same time, her large-scale orchestral work *The Dream of Stepan Razin* was composed in 1949 and was 'deemed fit to open four successive seasons at the Leningrad Philharmonic's Grand Hall.'⁵³⁶ The premiere of this cantata was so well received by the Soviet audience and music community that it prompted Sabinina to write in the 1949 issue of *Sovetskaya muzyka*:

One must admit that G. Ustvol'skaya possesses a great talent, musical taste and a specific flair for orchestration ... The work of a talented young composer is marked by an individual style and demonstrates fine use of compositional techniques.⁵³⁷

The Dream of Stepan Razin was also given its premiere in 1949 by the Leningrad Philharmonic Orchestra, conducted by Yevgeny Mravinsky (conductor, 1903–1988), and was soon adopted by the main Leningrad orchestras in their mainstream repertoires. Soviet publications of the same era encompass further praise of this early work:

⁵³⁴ Ferenc, op. cit., p. 16.

⁵³⁵ Schwarz, op. cit., p. 227.

⁵³⁶ Bagrenin, <www.ustvol'skaya.org> (accessed on 22/04/2015).

⁵³⁷ Marina Sabinina, 'Chetyre simfonicheskie novinki: "Son Stepana Razina" G. Ustvol'skoy' ['Four symphonic novelties: The Dream of Stepan Razin by G. Ustvol'skaya'], *Sovetskaya muzyka*, No. 8 (Moscow: Sovetsky kompozitor, 1949), pp. 76–77.

The unusual intervallic structure, laconism and rhythmic expressiveness are the main characteristics of Ustvol'skaya's style. Music communicates the warmth and sincerity of feelings [...] Ustvol'skaya demonstrates masterful skills in instrumentation and arranging folk-song material.⁵³⁸

Most significantly, perhaps, Ustvol'skaya's official music — in contrast to her later compositions — was used as an example of 'true nationalist art' in the official attack on the young composer Alexander Lokshin (1920–1987) by Tikhon Khrennikov (1913–2007), in 1949. In his speech, Khrennikov admonished Lokshin's 'modernist' creativity by publicly comparing it to the ideal example of true Soviet art: Ustvol'skaya's *The Dream of Stepan Razin*.⁵³⁹ Furthermore, the preface to the 1963 *Sovetsky kompozitor* publication of *The Dream of Stepan Razin* introduces Ustvol'skaya as the fully-fledged Soviet composer she had become. Significantly also, *The Hero's Exploit* was written for the fortieth anniversary of the October Revolution, and won the All-Union prize in 1959.⁵⁴⁰

This professional success was short-lived, for by 1950 'her name had begun to disappear from the concert bills, to be replaced by those of the socially connected and the officially sanctioned.'⁵⁴¹ Sure enough, the 1950s saw the emergence of Ustvol'skaya's mature style alongside this public compositional persona. Her compositional output during this decade is paradoxical. On one hand, there are the explicitly Soviet works (*Man from the High Mountain* (1952), *Hail, Youth!* (1950), *Dawn Over the Fatherland* (1952), Suite for Orchestra (1955), *Lights in the Steppes*, *The Sport Suite* (1958) and a number of film scores) but a secret, personal series of compositions were also completed (Sonata for Violin and Piano, Piano Sonatas 3 and 4, Twelves Preludes for Piano, Grand Duet). In the wake of Zhdanov's decree, it is not difficult to see why it would be preferable to function artistically in this fashion: professional success, and thus material gain, could

⁵³⁸ L. Rappoport, 'Galina Ustvol'skaya', *Sovetskaya muzyka*, No. 9 (Moscow: Sovetsky kompozitor, 1959), pp.12–18.

⁵³⁹ Tikhon Khrennikov, 'Za noviy pod'em sovetskoy muzyky' ['Towards a New Rising in Soviet Music'], *Sovetskaya muzyka*, No. 12 (Moscow: Sovetsky kompozitor, 1949), p. 51.

⁵⁴⁰ Kozinn, op. cit..

⁵⁴¹ Bagrenin, <www.ustvol'skaya.org> (accessed on 22/04/2015).

be earned by completing these large-scale ‘official’ works, whilst seeking a private artistic satisfaction through these personal, secret compositions.

The personal salvation Ustvolskaya was to achieve through the secret compositions soon began to outweigh the advantages of her official career. Ustvolskaya thus gradually edged away from the limelight her Soviet composing career provided, and withdrew into her private, spiritual environment. By the 1960s, Ustvolskaya dispensed completely with her public, official compositions. After a period of silence, Ustvolskaya preferred to live unknown and in relative poverty than compromise any longer with the state’s official requirements, and she devoted her life and music to the austere spiritual conviction for which she has become widely known. From the early 1970s on, Ustvolskaya certainly neither wished to compromise with the authorities nor wanted to be reminded about her previous concessions to them. Bokman reportedly once plucked up the courage to ask Ustvolskaya where the scores were for several of her works listed in the Soviet Music Encyclopedia, such as *A Man From the High Mountain* and *The Hero’s Exploit*. Ustvolskaya reportedly exclaimed: ‘There are no such works! I myself took everything back and destroyed them! I even took them back from the Music Archives!’⁵⁴² It is indeed difficult to find these scores, and they no longer exist in the Composer’s Union library in Moscow.⁵⁴³ By the time Ustvolskaya composed her major works, Symphonies Nos. 2–5 and Compositions Nos. 1–3, there was certainly an element of truth in Gladkova’s assertions that Ustvolskaya never took commissions and prioritised spiritual integrity over material matters:

Ustvolskaya could write easy and engaging music (her early compositions which were not included in the catalogue speak for themselves), but she did not strive for this, she did not take commissions; she preferred to live in ignominy and poverty. ... In her life, Ustvolskaya did not know how to ‘please’ anyone and, frankly, never wished to do so.⁵⁴⁴

This refusal to compromise with the state was met with some surprise by many of Ustvolskaya’s contemporaries. The widely accepted view and consequent

⁵⁴² Bokman, op. cit., p. 140.

⁵⁴³ In conversation with Marina Petrovna, Moscow Composers’ Union, Moscow, 05/04/2008.

⁵⁴⁴ Gladkova, op. cit., p. 42.

prevalent understanding – in both Russian and the West alike – of Ustvolskaya’s music, is perhaps best summarised by Blois in *A Shostakovich Companion*:⁵⁴⁵

Ustvolskaya’s music is decidedly an acquired taste. In its spiritual goals and technical means there is a wilful nonconformity mixed with a puritanical austerity: its motivic material is generally nondescript, its harmonies neutral gradations of add-on dissonance, its rhythm often reduced to a steady, undifferentiated pulse. And yet it is music of intense passion and incorruptible integrity, wedged within the confines of an aesthetic that is uncompromisingly, sometimes agonizingly narrow. It takes the listener into solitary, even disturbing regions of experience that implicitly demand total surrender to its absolute authority. It is music that is at once either utterly trivial or unfathomably deep.⁵⁴⁶

Blois’s remarks do indeed resonate with the most well-known examples of Ustvolskaya’s music, and certainly all of these compositions after 1961, but is far-removed from these early, public works. In stark contrast to the version of Ustvolskaya commented on here by Blois, there was reportedly a different side to the composer, as chronicled by Bokman. When Bokman told Ustvolskaya of how he had nearly received a commission to write music for a play, she reportedly replied: ‘Too bad, you could have made some money’.⁵⁴⁷ Apparently Ustvolskaya then continued by cheerfully remembering how she had received 30,000 rubles for composing music for a scientific film before the 1961 reforms. The film was later translated into Mongolian and the payment, repeated, enabled her to spend the money on a taxi (an anecdote she is recalled as relaying ‘with pleasure’).⁵⁴⁸ Further anecdotal oddities are attributed to Ustvolskaya: Ustvolskaya is reported to have instructed her students ‘Learn to write on commission, or else you will be asked to write for a play and you will say: “I don’t write this, I only write funeral marches...”’⁵⁴⁹ Furthermore, during the time leading up to the 100th birthday of Lenin, Ustvolskaya announced to her students that they were to get involved with the composers’

⁵⁴⁵ And by Lange’s CD liner notes. Lange, op. cit..

⁵⁴⁶ Louis Blois, ‘The Shostakovich Legacy’, Mishra, op. cit., p. 496.

⁵⁴⁷ Bokman, op. cit., p. 131. Bokman’s anecdote is, however, implausible, as 30,000 roubles would have been at that time enough to buy a small apartment.

⁵⁴⁸ Bokman, *ibid.*, p. 131.

⁵⁴⁹ Bokman, *ibid.*, p. 31.

contest associated with the event. “It would be better, perhaps, to use a text,” she suggested, “Look in the papers. Sometimes you can find poetry there that isn’t bad.”⁵⁵⁰ It is made all the more surprising when it is remembered that the year was 1970, when Ustvolskaya was completing her most uncompromising musical works, although Bokman does admit that perhaps ‘all this “Leninmania” was not to her liking’.⁵⁵¹

In his introduction to his *Such Freedom, if Only Musical*, Schmelz addresses the Western idea of the dissident Soviet artist. As an example, he highlights Joseph Horowitz’s article regarding the ‘Masterpieces of the Russian Underground’ festival presented by the Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center: ‘the underground composers shared with Shostakovich an urgent dissident vision by bypassing the certainties of socialist realism.’⁵⁵² Schmelz suggests that this understanding of the role of the Soviet composer is nothing more than a misunderstood simplification:

Although active participants in a socially meaningful subculture, the unofficial composers were in no way dissidents, or at least none more so than any other artists within the Soviet system. The romanticizing assumption is fuelled by Western cold war myths of artistic production in the Soviet Union that do a disservice to all artists active at the time by singling out certain ones as more heroic than the rest.⁵⁵³

Schmelz also draws attention to the comments of composer Rodion Shchedrin (b. 1932) during an interview between the two: ‘I am certain there were no kinds of dissidents [in music]. That’s nonsense...In the first place, they all received apartments from the Union of Composers. If you are a dissident, then don’t take those apartments.’⁵⁵⁴ This must be kept in mind when considering Ustvolskaya’s response to official requirements. Sure enough, her private works were at the opposite pole to the socialist realist style of her more public works, but was that enough to make her a dissident? Her private works went against official requirements and so, by implication, can be considered critical

⁵⁵⁰ Bokman, *ibid.*, p. 36.

⁵⁵¹ Bokman, *ibid.*

⁵⁵² Joseph Horowitz, ‘Where Composers Still Held Sway, from Underground’, *New York Times*, section 2, 19/01/2003, p. 39.

⁵⁵³ Schmelz, *op. cit.*, pp. 13–14.

⁵⁵⁴ Schmelz, *ibid.*, p. 14.

of the socialist realist style, but composing secret music for publication several decades later cannot truly be seen as dissidence. It would seem, however, that Ustvolskaya's personal music acted as a form of escape, rather than confrontation. Her rejection of the values imposed on her resulted in her gradual withdrawal from artistic community during the 1950s, and dedication to her personal form of private protest, from the 1960s.

Chapter 1 surveys the changes that Ustvolskaya's catalogues have incurred over the years, and includes a list of all works that have been categorised for the purposes of this thesis as 'official'. Ustvolskaya's private works would have been considered unacceptable formalist experiments by the regime, and so were sentenced to a coexisting domain of near secrecy for, sometimes, decades. But for the main part of her early career Ustvolskaya was an approved Soviet composer who — through her own musical abilities — almost effortlessly fulfilled official requirements in a particularly inventive fashion, by presenting piece after piece to the public domain in the permissible Soviet spirit. This chapter will provide analyses and descriptions of the musical content of many of these works, as well as observations on the political climate from which this music sprang.

6.1: Ustvolskaya and the 1948 Central Committee Resolution on Music

Following her graduation in 1948 Ustvolskaya began her career independently and, for the first time, attempted to make her mark on the Soviet music system outside of the walls of the Leningrad Conservatory. As previously touched upon, this was a tumultuous time in Soviet music history: in February of the very same year, Zhdanov issued a decree aimed at the opera *The Great Friendship* by Georgian composer Vano Muradeli (1908–1970), accusing the composer of 'antiartistic work pernicious with respect both to its music and its subject matter'. The resolution continued by outlining the opera's 'principal

faults,’ and the composer’s musical ‘failures’,⁵⁵⁵ an event that, naturally, was to have a profound effect upon active composers at the time, let alone those, such as Ustvolskaya, who were starting out on their careers. *The Great Friendship* was composed to commemorate the anniversary of the thirtieth anniversary of the October Revolution. Muradeli’s opera saluted the Soviet victory in the North Caucasus after the revolution and celebrated the ethnic diversity of the Soviet Union. Yet Zhdanov only addressed the opera in the very opening of his resolution and, upon concluding that accused Muradeli of choosing the ‘false path of formalism’, and continued by naming and condemning six other prominent Soviet composers with this same charge. The resolution also presented a grave warning to students and graduates of the conservatories, a caution that would have been particularly relevant to Ustvolskaya as she began the search for her own compositional voice:

The pernicious and anti-social formalist trend in Soviet music also exercises its baneful influence on the training of young composers in our conservatories, above all in our Moscow Conservatory, where, under the direction of V. Shebalin, the formalist trend dominates. Students are not being taught to respect the best traditions of Russian and Western classical music, or to love folk music and democratic musical forms. The work of many conservatory graduates blindly follows the examples set by D. Shostakovich, S. Prokofiev, and the like.⁵⁵⁶

The timing of this condemnation followed several other similar crackdowns in other art forms: a number of decrees in 1946 had already established governmental policy for literature, film and theatre. But the resolution was not merely the genesis of an ideological campaign by the regime: it instigated a wider crackdown that would set the official policy for music.⁵⁵⁷ The resolution continued by outlining exactly what was required from the Soviet Union’s

⁵⁵⁵ Frolova-Walker, Walker, *Music and Soviet Power: 1917–1932*, op. cit., pp. 10–15.

⁵⁵⁶ Frolova-Walker, Walker, *ibid.*, p. 13.

⁵⁵⁷ Maximenkov observes the many ways in which the resolution was different from standard Soviet practice: evidence that leads him to thus conclude that the target here was not merely Muradeli’s opera, but had rather a far greater purpose. Leonid Maximenkov, Noëlle Mann ed., ‘The Rise and Fall of the 1948 Central Committee Resolution on Music’, *The Three Oranges Journal*, No. 16 (2008), pp. 14–20. Igor Vishnevetsky, *Sergei Prokofiev* (Moscow: Molodaya gyardiya, 2009), p. 586. Vishnevetsky offers an explanation of this campaign, which is related more to Stalin’s personal tastes and, in particular, the conflict of popularity between him and Georgy Ordzhonikidze.

composers, as well as quietly threatening the consequences if these outlines were not adhered to:

The Soviet people expects composers to produce high-quality and ideologically solid works in every genre – in opera, symphonic music, song, and in choral and dance music. ... It would be unforgivable if they did not avail themselves of these rich opportunities, or if they failed to direct all their efforts along the correct path of realism. ... The Central Committee resolves ... to call upon Soviet composers to carry out the high demands made by the Soviet people regarding musical creation; everything that weakens our music and hinders its development should be swept away by composers, thereby ensuring an upsurge of creative work that would move Soviet music forward and lead, in all areas of composition, to the kind of valuable, high-quality works that the Soviet people deserves.⁵⁵⁸

The Resolution initiated the First Congress of Soviet Composers, which was held in Moscow on 19–25 April 1948 and at which the Composers' Union was formally legalised (and, indeed, when Ustvol'skaya first joined the Union herself). From the adoption of its constitution, innovative composers were customarily reprimanded, and all modernist composition was considered a 'Formalist Art' and was outright banned: anything that, in Zhdanov's opinion, could be considered 'a total negation of musical art'⁵⁵⁹ through the inclusion of atonality or dissonance, would have resulted in serious repercussions from the authorities. New rules were set out in Zhdanov's 1948 Resolution, addressing what was acceptably Soviet music, as part of the complete subjugation of Soviet intellectual life. Eminent composers had no choice but to submit safe, compliant music that would fulfil the ideological requirements demanded from them and, as a result, keep them away from the most serious of consequences. Allegations of Formalism were life-changing and potentially career-shattering. Ferenc summarises the impact Zhdanov's decree had on those found guilty of formalistic distortions and anti-democratic tendencies (specifically, Prokofiev, Myakovsky, Shebalin, Aram Khachaturian (1903–1978), Gavriil Popov (1904–1972) and Shostakovich):

⁵⁵⁸ Frolova-Walker, Walker, *Music and Soviet Power: 1917–1932*, op. cit., p. 15.

⁵⁵⁹ Frolova-Walker, Walker, *ibid.*

For them, the official alienation translated into a loss of employment, cancellation of performances, and delays in future endeavours. At the Composers' Union, the leadership of the Orgkomitet was deposed and Tikhon Khrennikov was appointed to the post of the Union's General Secretary, which he was to hold for many years. A similar censuring of musicologist ensued. In the following year, Russia's best musical scholars were reproached for their interest in foreign music, for approaching Russian music with Western concepts, and for their own associations with composers now out of favour, and were forced to rethink historical developments in light of the official party line.⁵⁶⁰

Unsurprisingly the control imposed by this resolution left nothing to the imagination of Soviet composers as to what was officially required from them, and quashed the natural evolution of compositional development – and, needless to say, the pedagogical order – that would have otherwise occurred. The result of the control imposed by Soviet authorities was irreparable damage to the education system and the wider repression of musical progression, and Ustvol'skaya's music was no exception to this. Soviet support was only granted to true Soviet art as outlined in the Resolution: mass songs, choruses, cantatas and oratorios that ultimately honoured the party policy under the guise of the 'Soviet People'. It was necessary for melodies to be memorable, the subject accessible, and the music to be fundamentally simple, optimistic and uplifting in such a way as to glorify the state. Any forward thinking or progressive music was to be condemned to the category of formalism: denounced as music reserved for the undesirable bourgeoisie.

It was an adverse coincidence that these political events coincided with the beginnings of the young Ustvol'skaya's career. Her studentship and, by this time, blossoming friendship with Shostakovich would have exposed her to an intimate understanding of the demands – and consequent strains – that were imposed on active composers at this time. During the 1948 attacks, Ustvol'skaya had written to Shostakovich offering her support to him during this difficult time.⁵⁶¹ It is necessary to re-emphasise here how Ustvol'skaya did not wish to be associated with any of the works that are now to be discussed. The purpose of this chapter is not to go against the composer's wishes by using

⁵⁶⁰ Ferenc, *op. cit.*, p. 16.

⁵⁶¹ In conversation with Olga Digonskaya, Shostakovich Archive, Moscow, 06/04/2008. There is no longer any evidence of these letters, as Ustvol'skaya insisted that they were to be destroyed.

these works as evidence to counterbalance her spiritual integrity: quite the contrary. It is imperative to view the entirety of Ustvol'skaya's compositional output in order to place her catalogued works into the context from which they were released.

6.2: The 'Official' Works

Several compositions that are included in her 1998 catalogue are here categorised as 'official' works despite not being included in her 1996 catalogue. This is because – although listed by Sikorski in Ustvol'skaya's official catalogue – these were never published in the West. These works – *Lights in the Steppes*, *The Hero's Exploit*, *The Dream of Stepan Razin*, Symphony No. 1 and Suite for Orchestra – are, it must be noted, very different in both style and subject to her more personal works, and have been included in this chapter due to their kinship with the state's artistic requirements, as well as in light of Ustvol'skaya's strange behaviour surrounding their publication by Sikorski. In an interview with Duffek, the Sikorski representative told the current author how reluctant Ustvol'skaya had been to include these in her personal catalogue, yet was persuaded to do so as her chosen catalogue was too small. Duffek did not divulge whether it was the composer's choice that these pieces were not printed, nor did he comment on the ambiguous titles Ustvol'skaya gave to these works in the official Sikorski listings: *Lights in the Steppes* has been catalogued by Sikorski under the ambiguous title 'Symphonic Poem No. 1' and *The Hero's Exploit* as 'Symphonic Poem No. 2'.⁵⁶² Little more has been said about this ambiguous renaming of these works, despite this action being referred to Lemaire as 'rather hypocritical[ly]'⁵⁶³: one can only assume that Ustvol'skaya still wished to withhold as much information regarding the content of these scores as possible.⁵⁶⁴

⁵⁶² In conversation with Duffek, London, 22/11/2009.

⁵⁶³ Lemaire, *Galina Ustvol'skaya: Piano Concerto/Symphony 1*, op. cit..

⁵⁶⁴ In conversation with Duffek, London, 22/11/2009.

There are several official works that have not survived, yet it has been possible to locate some of the missing scores that have been held in personal collections, as well as some historical archives. Many of these works deal with explicitly Soviet subjects, and the titles alone severely contradict Ustvol'skaya's later spiritual style. It is perhaps not surprising that Ustvol'skaya wished to distance herself from such works from her youth and remove them from her history although, musicologically, it is a great misfortune that these scores no longer survive. Along with these explicitly Soviet scores, there are other works that are also missing, and give little away with their titles: String Quartet (1945), Suite No. 3 (1951), Sinfonietta (1951) and Suite for Orchestra. As Ustvol'skaya was establishing herself as an emerging Soviet composer, the 1950s were the most fruitful decade of her career in terms of compositional output. In the 1980 edition of *The New Grove Dictionary of Music* (written before the collapse of the Soviet Union) Genrikh Orlov considers the contrast between her personal/mature works and mature works and those official works written for large ensembles:

Rhythm [in the mature works] is sharply polarized: ostinatos may accompany a free, rhetorically expressive line, and the music is flexible polymetric, without bar-lines. In this way acute, outspoken emotion is associated with obsessive, mechanical motion. These qualities are somewhat diluted in the orchestral works, where texts or programmes educe more descriptive music.⁵⁶⁵

It would indeed seem as if the programmes and texts for these works were responsible for the shaping of the music away from Ustvol'skaya's secret, personal style. The texts, for example, for *Dawn Over the Fatherland* and *A Man from a High Mountain*, were written by N. Gleyzarov, a socialist poet and song-lyricist who achieved great success under Stalin. In addition, Ustvol'skaya completed a number of film scores during the 1950s, including *Boldinsky Autumn* (1951), *Gogol* (1954) and *Russian Museums* (1954). Ustvol'skaya also went to great lengths to eradicate these films from her catalogue and personal history and thus it is not only very difficult to find them, but neither

⁵⁶⁵ Genrikh Orlov, Stanley Sadie ed., 'Galina Ustvol'skaya', *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, Vol. 19 (London: Macmillan Publishers Ltd., 1980), p. 478.

Ustvolskaya nor Bagrenin have spoken, or will speak, about them to any interested enquirer.

As previously discussed, as the end of the 1920s saw the end of the avant-garde experiment, a more proletarian-oriented mood was required from the creative output in the arts: composers had to reflect the new cultural and social order that had swept over Russia in their music. Music's abstract nature led it to be the subject of intense debate as to the direction it should take, but composers were by now encouraged by the authorities to pursue 'revolutionary inspiration.'⁵⁶⁶ Marxist, revolutionary intellectuals such as Anatoly Lunacharsky (1875–1933) also defended Russia's pre-revolutionary music history as the proletariat's rightful cultural inheritance. Music after 1932, however, was subject to centralisation and intense cultural control, and musicians such as Ustvolskaya were required to uphold the direction of the 1932 resolution. Until Stalin's death in 1953, central authority would divert Soviet society from all counterrevolutionary, formalist trends. Artists were encouraged to pursue socialist realism, continuing the artistic creed that disposed of individualistic trends and expressed the interests of the proletariat. Marina Frolova-Walker and Jonathan Walker highlight the thesis by Comrd. Grigory Tsiperovich (socialist revolutionary, Petrograd Trade Union leader, 1911–1932) that was read at the end of the final discussion on the topic 'Art and the Proletariat' in 1918 to great applause and enthusiasm from most of the audience. It was in the thesis that he proposed the direction of socialist realism and outlines its requirements:

⁵⁶⁶ Ferenc, *op. cit.*, p. 13.

The highest form of socialist production is art. The highest form of socialist life is beauty. Only the masses can be the true creators of socialist life, but the working classes consider artists, poets, musicians and actors to be capable of giving expression to its will towards socialist beauty.

The proletariat is striving towards new, mass forms of art and towards new socialist content for art. But in doing so, it takes on new material from the art of the past. The proletariat will arrive at the new socialist art only through schooling in the best work of the greatest artists, which it has not had access to until now. It decidedly rejects adventurism in new endeavours, and demands that these should present a socialist conclusion drawn from all the premises humanity has created, rather than a simple rejection and destruction of existing culture...

But keeping in mind the peculiarities of art and its creators, the proletariat thinks it necessary to facilitate the organisation of artists and actors by refraining from any demand that the artists should form strict and complete organisations; this should help them in every way to bring about unity, both amongst themselves, and also between themselves and the working class.

For this reason, the Petrograd Soviet of Trade Unions is inviting the newly created union of artists and actors to join the Soviet as an autonomous section via the department of culture and education.

Through this union, we can, in practice, realise the task of serving industry through the work of creators of art...

Given all that has been said, the Soviet Unions invites artists, musicians, poets, sculptors, and actors to come together into one close family, to organise a union of the arts with urgency, and to join the ranks of the proletariat for the purpose of working together in the name of socialism, in the name of universal equality, and in the name of universal beauty.⁵⁶⁷

Music was not permitted as an academic arrangement, but had to be directed by musical themes that reflected Soviet life and society. Yet there was a problem in ascertaining a new form of symphonic development, a question that James Bakst considers:

⁵⁶⁷ Marina Frolova-Walker, Jonathan Walker, *Music and Soviet Power: 1917–1932*, op. cit., pp. 21–22.

The problem of Soviet musical realism is how to produce a new type of realistic rhythmic symphonic development. Soviet esthetics bases its conclusions on Marxist-Leninist principles of struggle, development, and the onward march of social aspects. Rest and conciliation of opposite social aspects are inherent in the struggle of opposed elements and are relative. Soviet musical realism is called upon to create compositions not only with dynamic developments, but also music of a contemplative, peaceful character expressing emotions and impressions of Soviet reality ... A skilful employment of musical conciseness does not mean a preponderance of harmonic or timbre aspects but a preponderance of a definite image ... In contemporary Soviet music the influx of images calls for a mastery of thematic development. Contrasting dynamic changes of motivic fragments ... become indispensable in Soviet music as a means for establishing victory of vital life-asserting aspects of Soviet reality.⁵⁶⁸

So every musical feature of an ‘official’ Soviet work – whether rhythm, subject matter, melodic or harmonic development, or the text used – had to incorporate elements of the above aesthetics. The current chapter will review each possible musical feature, survey exactly what the Soviet authorities would require from a composer in that area, and review how Ustvol'skaya's official works fit into this scheme.

6.2.1: Subject Matter and Text

Ustvol'skaya's Symphony No. 1 differs enormously from her subsequent four symphonies as it is the only one not to consist of an overtly spiritual subject (the remaining symphonies bear religious subtitles). The work is scored for orchestra and two treble soloists, and consists of ten contrasting movements set in three ‘parts’, and including a folk text by Gianni Rodari, an Italian Communist children's writer whose main themes were occupied with the struggle of the underclasses.⁵⁶⁹ Part II of Symphony No. 1 is sandwiched between the first and third parts that act as a prologue and epilogue to the main

⁵⁶⁸ James Bakst, *A History of Russian-Soviet Music* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1966), pp. 291–292.

⁵⁶⁹ Rodari was a very successful writer under Stalin (he married a Russian woman following his many travels to the USSR), and a collection of his writings was even published in Georgian. Lemaire, *Galina Ustvol'skaya: Piano Concerto/Symphony 1*, op. cit..

portion of the work: singing features in Part II only, the other sections are purely instrumental. In terms of playing length, none of the sections in Part II take longer than two minutes to play. Part I is only slightly longer, but Part III lasts for five times as long as the shortest section (*Buy Jumble!*). In extreme contrast to the subjects of her later works, this chosen text immediately thrusts Symphony No. 1 into the realms of socialist realism. The poems selected by Ustvol'skaya all describe the destiny of the poor. *Ciccio* recounts the fate of poor children living in a cave near a dumping ground; *Merry-go-round* recounts how a black child will never be accepted by his white neighbours; *Saturday Night* describes the absence of a satisfactory wage for the father; *The Young Boy from Modena* addresses the grief of children who were orphaned as a result of a brutal subduing of a legitimate strike; *Buy Jumble!* is about the rag-and-bone man; *The Waiting Room* describes a vagabond in the railway station's waiting room; *When Chimneys Die* addresses the issue of unemployment and *Sun!* concerns a sense of darkness with no hope.⁵⁷⁰ Throughout this work, Ustvol'skaya alludes to folk music, making the work accessible to the Soviet proletariat, whilst providing the music with a sense of national identity – all with the aim of pleasing the Soviet authorities. Straddling the distance between her official oeuvre and her more expressionistic output, however, Symphony No. 1 was not embraced by the Soviet regime despite its subject matter, and was performed only once in the Soviet Union in 1966.

Symphony No. 1, however, was not the only work of Ustvol'skaya's that was to bear socialist realist subject matter. The *Dream of Stepan Razin* was a programmatic composition that utilised Russian folk music material and quotations of Russian heroic folk tales. Taruskin discusses the representation of Russian folk music in Glinka's *Life for the Tsar*, and identifies the chief identifying traits of what he refers to as 'urban style Russe'⁵⁷¹. According to Taruskin, these identifying traits include: dominance of duple (or compound duple) time, irregular grouping of duple bars, cadential terminations consisting of falling fourths or fifths, and an overriding interplay of relative major and minor keys.⁵⁷² He uses Vanya's song (*A Life for the Tsar*, act 3) to demonstrate

⁵⁷⁰ Lemaire, *ibid.*.

⁵⁷¹ Taruskin, *Defining Russia Musically: Historical and Hermeneutical Essays*, op. cit., p. 29.

⁵⁷² Taruskin, *ibid.*.

Glinka's representation of this urban *Russe* in conventional operatic music.

Ex. 6.1: Vanya's Song (*A Life for the Tsar*, act 3)

Allegro moderato

Kak mat' u - bi - li u ma - la - go pten - sa,

The parallels between this appearance of the Russian folk style in *A Life for the Tsar* and Ustvolskaya's *The Dream of Stepan Razin* are unmistakable. The opening, main baritone melody is in duple time, although the phrase lengths are irregular in terms of the number of bars per phrase: 4 (bars), 5, 4, 4. Three of the four phrases in this opening section end on a falling fifth (and the fourth, a rising fourth, which is merely the inversion of this main cadential characteristic). Rhythmic similarities can also be identified between these two extracts. The text is generally set syllabically, barring the occasional 'decoration' on a syllable in the form of a short melisma on two quavers.

Ex. 6.2: *The Dream of Stepan Razin*, main baritone melody

Despite this example of the musical style that Ustvol'skaya later rejected, it is necessary to remember that this work was eventually included in her Sikorski catalogue of 1998 despite, rather strangely, having never been published by Sikorski, and therefore never readily available in the West. In her later work Ustvol'skaya would be concerned only by her own personal demands, but this was far from the case in the instance of such programmatic music. In stark contrast to her personal work, *The Dream of Stepan Razin* is written for a full orchestra, and the score is set out absolutely conventionally. Included in the score are time signatures and bar lines, and rather generically the piece is marked *Moderato* (in stark contrast to the exaggerated dynamic markings found in her later works), the solo cor anglais at the beginning *piano* and *dolce*. Ustvol'skaya acknowledged the origins of the text she used for this purpose by marking on the score 'Folk Text' (*Slova narodniye*). The text itself is not only a traditional folk text that concerns a folkloric subject matter, but it also includes militaristic undertones and reference to glory in death. But perhaps the example of the most socialist realist work of Ustvol'skaya is her programmatic work *Lights in the Steppes* (catalogued in the Sikorski catalogue as Symphonic Poem No. 1).⁵⁷³ Although there is no text included in this symphonic poem, the title, the militaristic nuances of this work (replete with marching themes and brass fanfares), along with an overriding sense of optimism and triumph, are an exercise in socialist realism. This, alongside Ustvol'skaya's dedications of symphonic poems or orchestral suites to the Russian children, pioneers, heroes and sporting heroes, was generally to find favour with the authorities.⁵⁷⁴ Ustvol'skaya retains an emphasis on the text, throughout each of these compositions that include words. Almost without exception the text is set syllabically, and the vocal part thrust into the foreground. Even though the text in these official works does not have a spiritual significance, the words are still of utmost importance: it was just as important (if not more so when considering

⁵⁷³ Bokman listened to a recording of *Lights in the Steppes* (Catalogued as *Symphonic Poem No. 1*) with Ustvol'skaya at the composer's home. Ustvol'skaya was 'in a good mood' and as a result 'remembered that Shostakovich praised this work a lot saying "Good job, Galia!"' Bokman, op. cit., p. 55.

⁵⁷⁴ In conversation with Frolova-Walker, Cambridge, 28/11/2009.

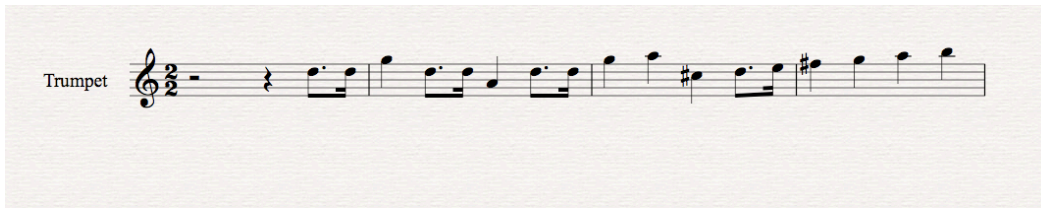
the artistic demands stipulated) to communicate the selected text in these socialist realist works.

The *Song of Praise* (1961) occupies a notable position in the chronology of Ustvolskaya's music, as it is the only work that she completed between 1959 and 1961, and is the very last 'official' work that she was ever to complete. Although it is unclear exactly as to why she did not compose for these two years, it is worth remembering that her Grand Duet (the work that was to precede this creative gap, completed in 1959) acts as a point of departure from her earlier, lyrical style, to her mature absolutism. Grand Duet begins to bear the hallmarks of her later style, and could have possibly thrust her into the danger of expulsion from her teaching position. After all, Grand Duet is intensely expressionistic and pessimistically inconclusive – ideologically 'incorrect' in terms of Soviet aesthetics. Perhaps *Song of Praise* was composed to counterbalance this work, to protect Ustvolskaya and firmly demonstrate to the authorities that she was still in need of her 'official' position, or perhaps it was composed out of financial need; we may never know. What is also in doubt (in light of her later extra-musical preoccupations) is to whom the praise is really directed.

6.2.2: Melody and Tonality

In contrast to Ustvolskaya's later works, which consist of the interaction between small melodic motifs, many of Ustvolskaya's official works place a greater emphasis on melodic development. Many of these melodies, as in *Song of Praise*, are rather limited in terms of their lyricism and are rather dominated by the grandiosity of their programmatic task (Ex. 6.3).

Ex. 6.3: *Song of Praise*, main fanfare melody



The Dream of Stepan Razin is, however, quite different: it begins with the folk melody introduced on the cor anglais, rising above shimmering, tremolo strings in their highest register. The main melody is soon taken over by the oboe, and incorporated into an exposed duet between these double reeds, still over tremolo violins. This passage diminuendos away from the already *pianissimo* marking to a high, unison A before the entry of an exposed, unaccompanied baritone who begins the song. The melody is a haunting, lyrical folk melody in D minor, in a firm 2/4 and marked *moderato*. A countermelody, as before, is introduced on the cor anglais and two oboes, but this time is joined by the bassoon.⁵⁷⁵ The orchestral accompaniment gradually thickens to a broader, accented accompaniment, the chords in the strings marked *fortissimo* at this point, before, again, diminuendoing to nothing. The mood changes suddenly at figure 4 with the words ‘*budta kon moy voronoy*’ (the contents of the dream – ‘my black horse’): the tempo is marked *accelerando* and the strings play percussive, offbeat pizzicato whilst offbeat percussion accompanies a slightly more energetic setting of the melody, still in the baritone. The piece, littered with crescendo markings and still marked *accelerando*, becomes more energetic and the texture thicker.

By figure 5 the strings are now *arco* with colourful, yet simple, syncopated rhythms. The texture thins out to repeated quavers on a unison C in the cor anglais, accompanying a diminuendoing motif in the cellos. The baritone enters once more with the same lyrical melody found earlier accompanied by a C major chord in the strings. This time, however, the melody has modulated to F minor, and the raised seventh in the melody (five bars after

⁵⁷⁵ In the first edition of this work held in the PSS, Ustvol'skaya's own handwriting inserts a *piano* marking at this point, to ensure that the publishers correct this mistake in any future editions.

figure 7) is the only melodic difference from when it first appeared, giving the melody an improvisatory and modal feel that adds to the impression of folk material. Ustvolskaya begins to develop the main melody at figure 8: although it remains essentially in F minor, the melody begins to meander chromatically before landing on a D \flat (marked *piano* in the 1963 *Sovetsky kompozitor* edition, but altered to *forte* in Ustvolskaya's handwriting as a correction in her own edition)⁵⁷⁶ which acts as an *Andante* three-bar bridge to an *Allegro* (3 bars after Figure 9). Here, for the first time, Ustvolskaya begins to alter the time signature to 5/8 and then back to 2/4, in order to accommodate the text syllabically, which is of utmost importance.

The *Allegro* is introduced by a G minor chord (against a D \flat in the voice) in the whole orchestra, which lasts for just one bar. The *divisi* violins continue with a tremolo G minor accompaniment (now against an E \flat in the voice part, marked *fortissimo*) before the voice gives way to an *accelerando* in the orchestra. This orchestral section is lush and energetic, with tremolos in the strings and woodwind, accompanying jerky, chromatic, accented motifs in the brass. This culminates in a general pause that provides a moment of respite before the transition back to an *Andante* at figure 11. This *Andante* consists of alternating time signatures every other bar between 2/4 to 3/4. When the voice re-enters after five bars, it joins in with the oscillating quavers found in the instrumental writing. During this section the melodic baritone line becomes more and more fragmented, until the folk line is barely recognisable. As the oscillating orchestral quavers drop out, a *dolce* duet between solo flute and cor anglais accompanies a slowly descending melody. The baritone once more drops out leaving just the polyphonic woodwind, and then only a solo clarinet.

A different mood overtakes at figure 16 in the *Allegretto*. Momentum is produced by a repeated, syncopated rhythmic motif pulsating in the strings. The melody in the baritone is no longer smooth and lingering, but is a fast, dotted, descending line that bears little resemblance to the opening. Despite the energy Ustvolskaya creates in the rhythms, the dynamic is very quiet: the timpani are marked *ppp*, the tuba *p*, and the *marcato* violins *pppp*. After the development in the orchestra, a recapitulation of the opening occurs, but this

⁵⁷⁶ Accessed by the author in the PSS, November 2008.

time the melody has moved from the cor anglais to the oboe. Rather than a completely unaccompanied baritone line, sustained, mid-register homophonic chords accompany the solo line. The ending consists of twenty-one bars of tremolo violin with various arpeggiated and chordal decorations in A major from the celesta, harp and lower strings. It is an epic ending to an epic work that centres upon folk material and – to an extent at least – exploits its material in a grandiose fashion suited to a Soviet performance.

Ex. 6.4: The ending of *The Dream of Stepan Razin*

The musical score is arranged in a system with five staves. From top to bottom, the staves are labeled: Fl., Ob., Cl.b., Canto, and Archi. The Fl. and Ob. staves begin with a *ppp* dynamic marking. The Canto staff features a long, sustained melodic line with a slur. The Archi staff is divided into two parts: the upper part (Violins) and the lower part (Violas and Cellos/Double Basses). The upper part of the Archi staff is marked *p* and *con sord.* (con sordina). The lower part of the Archi staff is marked *p*. The score concludes with a final chord in A major.

Cl. *solo*

Tr-be *pp*

Canto

V-c. *pizz.* *pp*

C-b. *pizz.* *pp*

Cl.

Tr-be

Cel.

V-ni I div.

V-ni II div.

V-c. *pp*

C-b. *pp*

Arpa

Cel. *pp*

V-ni I div. *ppp*

ppp

ppp

ppp

ppp

In contrast, a far smaller work, *Na Reke* [*On the River*] (1953) (Ex. 6.5) is a lesser-known short piano miniature that is firmly rooted in G major throughout, with the inclusion of a key signature and time signature. This score was found in the Moscow Composers' Union library by the author. Although it was published in 1953, there is no data concerning its genesis. Upon asking Bagrenin whether he could date this work, he replied that he had never heard of such a composition.⁵⁷⁷ The fact that the composition date of this work is not known means that it could well have been one of Ustvolskaya's very first student pieces, which may go some way to explain the lack of innovative or creative composition in the work. Nevertheless, it is expertly written for piano (especially given the youth of the composer at the at the time of publication), and is rather unremarkable in its melodic meanderings, which go far to reflect the title of the work. Yet it is a world away from even her Piano Sonata No. 1 of 1947, which only includes local tonal centres: Piano Sonata No. 1 is by no means rooted in a key, and rhythmic variety has been stripped down to crotchet hammerings in the first movement, and jerking dotted rhythms in the second. In stark contrast to *Na Reke*, Piano Sonata No. 1 substitutes a higher aesthetic for musical 'beauty'. These two works lined up side-by-side truly illuminate the difference between Ustvolskaya's more personal works (despite the austerity of her mature style still being a decade away), and those pieces she completed for the sake of her early, official career, or as a necessity to proceed in the education system.

⁵⁷⁷ Bagrenin, via e-mail, translated and received via Bakhmin, 09/06/2010.

Ex. 6.5: *Na Reke*, Ustvolskaya

Piano

mf *espress.*

Ped. Ped. Ped. Ped. Ped.

5

Pno.

f *pp*

Ped. Ped. Ped. Ped. Ped.

9

Pno.

A tempo *pp*

Ped. Ped.

12

Pno.

Ped. Ped. Ped. Ped.

2

15

Pno.

6va

f

rit.

18

Pno.

pp

rit.

6va

6va

21

A tempo

Pno.

pp

rit.

25

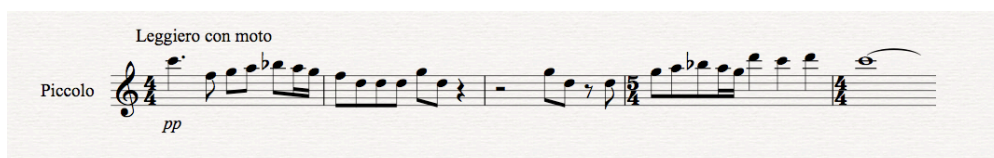
Pno.

rit.

In contrast to the lyrical melodies found in *Na Reke* and *The Dream of Stepan Razin*, *The Young Pioneer's Suite* (1950) opens with a solo brass fanfare, before this motif is taken up by the woodwind and strings and developed into a vast, thickly orchestrated texture, marked *bistro* (fast), with pounding timpani marking out each quaver beat. The orchestra takes a breath at figure 3 as the cornets reiterate their fanfares in double time to conclude the opening. The fanfare is also a characteristic of the opening of the sixth movement, and this time the military analogy is taken further thanks to the incorporation of a marching tambourine.

The idea of a militaristic march is continued through *Lights in the Steppes*, although it initially opens with a Shostakovichian lyricism in the form of a quiet, low, ominous bass-line. This *Lento* melody is chromatic (despite the lack of key signature) yet lyrical, and offers a desperate start to the symphonic poem, which continues for over four minutes as the texture slowly thickens as more instruments are introduced. The solution to this initial 'struggle' is first introduced by a distant trumpet call in figure 3, before the introduction of a cheerful, modal piccolo 'march theme' (see Ex. 6.6) in the *Leggiero con moto*, decorated between phrases by circus-like glissandi in the remaining woodwind. Percussive hammers that drive the *poco a poco accelerando* articulate each crotchet beat of the 4/4 bars. This march theme broadens across the entire orchestra and provides the first glance of militaristic optimism before it descends into an energetic frenzy: modulating through countless keys on the way, each section of the orchestra grows louder and faster until it explodes into figure 22.

Ex. 6.6: *Lights in the Steppes*, figure 30, march theme



The march melody appears once more, but in a far more subdued fashion than its previous manifestation. Ustvolskaya again directs the low and ominous

mood of the beginning. Figure 30 sees the introduction of the second subject (see Ex. 6.7) in the solo clarinet.

Ex. 6.7: *Lights in the Steppes*, figure 56, second subject

The image shows a musical score for a Clarinet part. It consists of two staves of music in 4/4 time, with a key signature of one sharp (C# minor). The first staff begins with a dynamic marking of *pp dolce*. The melody is characterized by several triplet markings, indicated by a '3' over groups of three notes. The notes are primarily eighth and sixteenth notes, often beamed together. The second staff continues the melodic line, also featuring triplet markings. The overall texture is melodic and lyrical.

Appearing in C# minor, the anomalous appearance of a sharpened sixth (an A#) gives this theme an oriental, folk-like modality that contributes towards the national identity of the piece and largely distinguishes it from any traditional Western counterparts. At figure 34, the pace is once more increased (crotchet = 84) and the militaristic fanfare introduces the return of the march theme in figure 38. This fanfare is found in the brass, but Ustvolskaya also instructs the violins to play *quasi-tr-ba*. The energy is high: even the return of the opening *Lento* theme is this time punctuated with percussive momentum. The final appearance of the march melody is lushly orchestrated in the strings. The music is this time sweet and sentimental: the rhapsodic finale is consonant, accessible and emotive, and is interrupted only by energetic rhythmic motifs in the bass that anticipate an empowered ending. Sure enough, the ending of this symphonic poem ensures the listener has discovered the means to overcome the initial struggle articulated in the opening: the correlation between this symphony and the ideals of the Soviet state's artistic ideology is tangible.

The climactic skirmish at the end of *The Hero's Exploit* (catalogued as Symphonic Poem No. 2) sees a density of orchestral texture that reflects the energy found in *Lights in the Steppes*: trills in the highest tessitura of the piccolo, and thunderous glissandi in the piano marked *molto crescendo* (figure 31) to *ffff*. Figure 32 is marked *espressivo* even at this heightened point, and each of the individual accented brass notes has a crescendo marked. This is not the definitive ending, however, as Ustvolskaya expertly reins in this orchestral pinnacle to finish the symphonic poem at *tranquillo* (minim = 52), with a

sustained piccolo solo accompanied by *pianissimo* strings. As it comes to rest on a final A major chord, this contemplative ending provides respite from the energetic vitality, and a chance to rest and reflect back on the accolades of the hero. Once more, it does not demand much from the listener to superimpose a Soviet realist narrative on the scenario.

Symphony No. 1, however, is quite different in terms of Ustvolskaya's implementation of melodic and tonal treatment, as the main melodic impression of this work is one of folk music (for an overview of the structure of this work, see Fig. 6.8). Yet the folk music here is merely an impression: no authentic material has been used.

Fig. 6.8: Structure of Symphony No. 1

1. Part I

- | | |
|------------|----------------------------------|
| 2. Part II | Mvt 1: Ciccio |
| 3. | Mvt 2: Merry-Go-Round |
| 4. | Mvt 3: Saturday Evening |
| 5. | Mvt 4: The Young Boy from Modena |
| 6. | Mvt 5: Buy Jumble! |
| 7. | Mvt 6: Waiting Room |
| 8. | Mvt 7: When the Chimneys Die |
| 9. | Mvt 8: Sun |

10. Part III

In *Ciccio*, the canto line is metrically and tonally akin to the *znamenny raspev* and therefore Russian folk material. Here, the melody proceeds in crotchets in stepwise movement and is metrically ambiguous; the text is set syllabically, and it is in a comfortable vocal tessitura. It is necessary to remember the connections between folk music and the chant when considering these works: of course, the inclusion of *znamenny raspev* was ideologically repellent to the Soviet authorities, yet the inclusion of folk material was not only permitted but encouraged (see Chapter 5.8 for the relationship between sacred music and folk music).

Ex. 6.9: *Ciccio*, Symphony No. 1, melody

Canto Solo

At figure 70 in Part III, Ustvolskaya's melody once more seems to have an affinity with features that have been identified as similar to those of the chant. Here Ustvolskaya notates her ascending scale through the use of flats, making both a visual and aural identification between the instrumental line and chant notation. At figure 58 in *When the Chimneys Die* all the instruments drop out, leaving an exposed vocal duet in which the second cantor descends to a low A pedal, accompanying the chant-like melody in the first cantor part (resembling typical liturgical practice).

Ustvolskaya includes basic folk-singing techniques such as the use of sequence (*Merry-go-Round*, vocal line, figure 23), canon (*The Young Boy from Modena*, figure 37) and sometimes both (*When the Chimneys Die*, figure 56). But Ustvolskaya treats these folk techniques with elements of what would later become her idiosyncratic style. For example, the interaction between the oboe and the voice results in aggressive clashes of tones that would not ordinarily be found in conventional canons and sequences (Ex. 6.10). This is a running tonal theme throughout the symphony, even where the use of canon is not employed: figures 23–24 of *Merry-go-Round* consist of a pounding quaver backdrop that does not compromise to the tonal direction of the vocal line.

Ex. 6.10: Sequence, canon and resulting dissonance, *When the Chimneys Die*, Symphony No. 1, figure 56, oboe and voice

The image shows a musical score for Oboe and voice. The Oboe part is written on a single staff with a treble clef. The voice part is written on a single staff with a treble clef. The score is divided into four measures. The first measure is in 5/4 time, the second in 4/4, the third in 5/4, and the fourth in 4/4. The Oboe part starts with a whole note G4, followed by a half note F#4, and then a whole note G4. The voice part starts with a whole note G4, followed by a half note F#4, and then a whole note G4. The two parts are in harmony for the first two measures, but become dissonant in the third and fourth measures due to the sequence of notes.

On occasions the two voices sing in harmony: take, for example, figure 23 in *Saturday Evening* where they sing in parallel fourths. However, Ustvolskaya does not include a third, rendering it harmonically ambiguous, and retaining the rather ominous sounding parallel fifths. By inverting the parallel fifths, Ustvolskaya discovers her parallel fourths. This ambiguous and unusual harmonic treatment results in a rather awkward vocal duet that is neither harmonically rooted nor conventional. In fact, at the very beginning of the entire work, Ustvolskaya immediately sets out the tribulations of the poet's subject in the dissonant clusters in the woodwind (figure 1: F# and E# in the oboes) and the funereal timpani. But this tonal discomfiture is juxtaposed against conventional, conclusive endings such as at the C major cadence at the end of *Merry-go-round*. Indeed, contrast runs through the entire symphony: in *The Young Boy from Modena*, the lively, eccentric Shostakovichian gestures in the strings are juxtaposed against exposed, lingering vocal lines accompanied only by the cor anglais. Even these eccentric quaver runs hold their own inner tension: although deeply rooted in 3/4 (articulated by the harp and left hand of the piano), the fourth quaver of every bar incorporates a strong emphasis since the strings are *divisi*, rhythmically breaking up each bar into two groups of three (this rhythmic feature is also reinforced by the right hand in the piano, which includes a syncopated, accented dotted crotchet on the fourth quaver beat).

The finale of Symphony No. 1 sees a new consonant motif (Ex. 6.11) appearing in the opening bars, which is passed around all the orchestral instruments – transposed and extended – resulting in dissonances between the various instrumental lines.

Ex. 6.11: Symphony No. 1, Part III, opening melodic motif



Throughout the finale, the overall tessitura of the orchestra climbs until there remain only high tremolos in the strings when the introduction of the timpani and staccato articulation marks aid the creation of a final march. The dissonance of the beginning is reprised at the ending, but now firmly within the context of a glorious march, easily interpreted as the glory of the Soviet Union in comparison to the capitalist world of the West. For the first time, the orchestra plays in its entirety, detaching this optimistic ending somewhat from the remainder of the symphony (which, until this point, has been more of a chamber symphony), ultimately offering Ustvolskaya's concluding symphonic comment firmly in the Soviet style.

6.2.3: Rhythm and Metre

Part I of Symphony No. 1 is metrically ambiguous: the dominant rhythmic value is the crotchet and there are frequently changing time signatures. Yet it must be noted that the vertical lines or 'bar lines' as they are presented in the 1957 Hans Sikorski edition are completely different from the bar lines in Ustvolskaya's autograph, although the remaining musical material is the same (see dotted line in manuscript example, Illus. 6.12a). If the bar lines in Ustvolskaya's autograph are taken into consideration then this shifts the piece considerably in terms of rhythm, metre and the emphasis of the text. The bar lines in her autograph divide the musical phrases into far longer groups (for example from the beginning to figure 4, the Sikorski edition has seventeen bars, and Ustvolskaya's autograph groups the music into just seven bars). The

autograph bars usually have ten or eleven crotchet beats each, in contrast to Sikorski's two or three. It is most unusual to be able to simply change the position of the bar lines in any piece. This leads only to a conclusion that bar lines are in fact, even at this early stage in Ustvolskaya's career, used unconventionally. In order to preserve a sense of the traditional, and to persuade the authorities that her music was not too innovative or radical Ustvolskaya kept them in, even though they had no bearing on the work to the extent that they could be completely altered in terms of their position.

Illus. 6.12a: Manuscript Example, Opening of Symphony No. 1

l=60 I

The manuscript shows the opening of Symphony No. 1, marked with a tempo of $l=60$ and a first movement (I). The score is written for a full orchestra and includes the following parts:

- Fl. picc. I
- 3 Flage. II (II = Fl. picc. II)
- 2 Ob.
- Contra. ingl.
- 4 Cl. in B
- Tr. picc. int.
- 3 Tr. gr. in B
- 3 Corni in G
- 3 Timpani
- Piano
- 5 Bass Drum

The score is divided into two systems, (1) and (2), with a double bar line between them. The key signature is one sharp (F#) and the time signature is 3/4. The music is marked with dynamics such as *p* (piano) and *con sord.* (con sordina). A large handwritten note at the bottom of the page reads:

исполнение симфонии и увертюры
подробнее смотрите на странице 201

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Illus. 6.12b: Opening of Ustvolskaya's Symphony No. 1 (published version)

Erste Sinfonie • First Symphony

Galina Ustvolskaja
Galina Ustvolskaja
1955 (*1919)

I

$\text{♩} = 60$

Piccolo I

p espr.

3 Flauti I, II, III

p espr.

2 Oboi

Corno inglese

4 Clarinetti in B I, II, III, IV

p espr.

Tromba piccola in D I

3 Trombe in B II, III

3 Corni in F I, II, III

Timpani

Piano

© 1957 by Musikverlag Hans Sikorski, for Germany, Denmark, Greece, Iceland, Israel, Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland and Turkey

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Although we may never know why this alteration took place between versions, it can be concluded that even in these early stages, when Ustvol'skaya was establishing her first official works, she was exploring ideas of metric and rhythmic freedom. Her later works, of course, did not incorporate bar lines at all, a prophecy implied by her treatment of bar lines in this work. Furthermore, Ustvol'skaya changed (in her own copy) the metric direction at figure 25 (*Merry-go-Round*) from 2/4 to 1/4.

This sense of additive rhythm saturates Symphony No. 1, with the exception of the march-like, typically socialist-realist, ending. In *Waiting Room* the metric pattern is rather unconventional (7/8, 7/8, 6/8, 7/8, 7/8, 6/8, 3/8, 3/8, 5/8 etc.). This is a further instance of where Ustvol'skaya has marked in her own copy that the time signature should in fact be 1/8.⁵⁷⁸ These additive rhythms imply a folk-like, improvisational flavour but in this example the comparison to Stravinsky's *Svadebka* is particularly noticeable owing to these rhythmic inferences, the percussive pizzicato strings, and the syncopated vocal rhythms. The piano is included in the ensemble as a percussion instrument in the most Stravinskian of ways.

The crotchet beat is also a characteristic of *The Young Pioneer's Suite*, as rhythm becomes the driving force behind the grandiosity that leads up to the coda. At figure 19, for example, the strings and oboes pound out accented, repeated crotchet beats against a sustained, unison E in the high brass, and tremolo, sustained chords in the high woodwind against syncopated crotchets in the low brass and woodwind. At this point (the climatic ending of the fifth movement), crotchets are the only rhythmic entity and therefore the only pulsations providing rhythmic momentum (redolent of the ending of her Piano Concerto). The opening of *Song of Praise* consists of a snare drum roll marked 'Tamburo militare': it marks out the beat on each crotchet with a roll between every other beat. After a two-bar introduction to set the mood, the first trumpet sings out a dotted fanfare motif as a 'calling sign' to the other three trumpets, which enter one by one. The overriding sense of metre is marked by the relentless crotchet beat, but the time signatures are not regular throughout, alternating between 2/2 and 3/4. Whilst there is an ambiguous sense of metre, it

⁵⁷⁸ Held in the PSS, accessed by the author October 2008.

is once more the crotchet that is the driving force behind the rhythmic impetus. In *Song of Praise*, the 2/2 bars are articulated throughout by four crotchets marked by both *Tambour military 1* and 2. The military implications found here are absolutely undeniable due to the marching percussion, the quartet of fanfaring trumpets and the *Marciale* tempo marking.

6.3: But Which Shade of Red?

At first glance, the tonal, conventionally orchestrated works do not seem the work of the same composer discussed in the previous chapters. Many of the compositional techniques employed seem directly to contradict the values evident in her more personal works. In *The Dream of Stepan Razin*, for example, there are time signatures, harmonic centres, lyrical melodies, syncopated rhythms, conventional modulations, a non-spiritual subject, a huge orchestra and so on. Is this really the Ustvolskaya who composed the other music for which she is more famous? The contrasting musical styles of these two works initially seem completely at odds with one another. This disparity in terms of musical style is broadly outlined in Table 6.13.

Table 6.13: Musical features in Ustvol'skaya's personal and official works

Musical Feature	Personal Style	Official Style
Instrumentation	Chamber Works Use of Piano Use of Narrator Unusual Combinations of Instruments	Large orchestra Choirs
Melody	Short, repeated melodic cells Chant-like melodic phrases	Folk Song Fanfares
Harmony	Dissonant Clusters No home key	Key Signatures Conventional Harmonic Progressions/ Modulations Element of Dissonance
Rhythm	Prevalence of obsessive crotchet and minim beat	Conventional Rhythmic Variety
Subject Matter	Quasi-liturgical/Ritualistic/Spiritual	Folklore
Text Used	Medieval Catholic/Orthodox Prayers	Folk Poetry
Metre	No Bar Lines No Time Signatures Strict Tempi	Bar Lines Time Signatures
Dynamics	Dynamic Extremity	Significant Variation
Style	"Minimalist" "Spiritual" "Avant-garde"	"Social Realist"
Mood	Severe, Brutal	Grandiose, Optimistic
Texture	Homophonic Sound Blocks Exaggerated Articulation Marks	Lush Orchestration Thick Textures

In order to understand these works, it is appropriate to highlight Lemaire's suggestion that the opening of the final movement of Symphony No. 1 is indebted to Stravinsky's *Symphony of Psalms* (discussed in Chapter 5). Lemaire does not suggest that these works are identical despite the melodic similarities: instead he proposes that Ustvol'skaya's Symphony No. 1 is an inversion of Stravinsky's *Symphony of Psalms*, as it provides a commentary on the suffering of human existence as opposed to Stravinsky's celebration of human life.⁵⁷⁹ Lemaire's hypothesis provides us with the attitude through which Ustvol'skaya's official works ought to be received. Rather than a complete disengagement with every value she was to come to hold dear, these works are the *antithesis* of her spirituality. An antithesis, of course, cannot

⁵⁷⁹ Lemaire, *Galina Ustvol'skaya: Piano Concerto/Symphony 1*, op. cit..

exist without the original object: her political agenda could not exist without a spiritual reality. Her first symphony, at least, was able to provide her with a platform to explore the depths of human misery (until the optimistic coda), even if it was under the umbrella of socialist realism.

This chapter has thus far been preoccupied with the discussion of Ustvolskaya's material in light of the requirements of socialist realism, and there is – to an extent – evidence to suggest that Ustvolskaya managed to distort her own personal style in order to indulge the authorities and, of course, make a living. But during the course of the discussion, there has also been evidence that demonstrates the incorporation of elements of Ustvolskaya's own personal style within her Soviet style. It must be remembered that these works in question were written between 1951 and 1961, before her mature style had fully developed and at a time in her career when it would have been natural for her to experiment musically. It is not beyond the realms of possibility that there was to be overlap between Ustvolskaya's early style, her official style, and her later mature work.⁵⁸⁰

There are, of course, many elements of the socialist realist style that Ustvolskaya was to dispense with entirely: the military fanfares, the explicitly socialist poetry and the gushing lyrical glorification of the socialist ideology to name but a few examples. But there are musical observations that can be made in her early works that anticipate her later style, not least the emphasis Ustvolskaya was to put on rhythm as a driving force throughout her music. Even in these official works, there is constant evidence of Ustvolskaya's defining rhythmic hallmark: the crotchet beat underlined by unusual dynamic markings, extreme dynamic contrasts and articulation/accent marks re-emphasised on every beat.

⁵⁸⁰ This overlap would have never been more tangible than during this 'crossover period': the end of the 1950s saw Ustvolskaya expanding her early style, developing her official style and anticipating the mature style that was to manifest itself but five years later.

Ex. 6.14: *The Hero's Exploit*, Figure 5, Woodwind

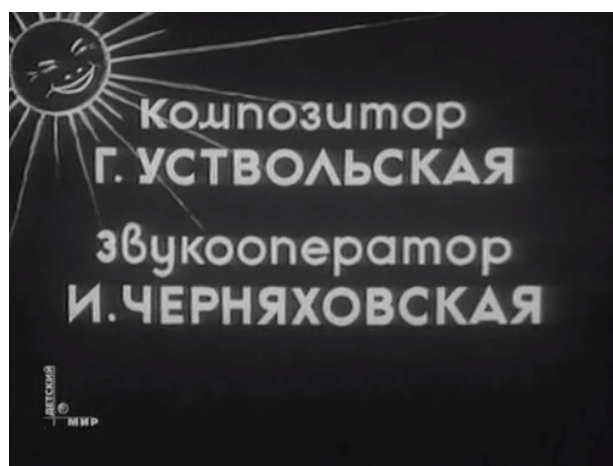
The musical score for Ex. 6.14 consists of five staves. The first staff is marked with a circled '5' above the first measure and 'ff' below. The second staff is also marked 'ff'. The third staff is marked 'ff'. The fourth and fifth staves are marked 'ff'. The music is in 4/4 time and features a series of chords and melodic lines across the staves.

A further hallmark can also be identified. For example, in Ustvolskaya's film score *The Girl and the Crocodile* (1956), Ustvolskaya provides each character with a form of 'leitmotif' (Ex. 6.15). Even in the opening sequence of the film, this motif can be heard when the crocodile appears on screen. These leitmotifs are, in turn, used to comprise the whole of the score. This is the most Ustvolskayan compositional technique of all: the exploitation of small melodic cells through inversion, variation and extension to create an entire work.

Ex. 6.15: 'Leitmotif' of the Crocodile from *Devochka i Krokodil* [The Girl and the Crocodile]

The musical score for Ex. 6.15 consists of two staves. The first staff is in bass clef and the second staff is in bass clef. The music is in 4/4 time and features a series of melodic lines across the staves.

Illus. 6.16: Stills from *The Girl and the Crocodile* (1956)



This technique is already evident in Part III of Symphony No. 1, as a six-note motif played by the solo oboe at the beginning is soon transposed, extended and doubled in the oboe and clarinet and further manipulated until it becomes the material for the eventual climax (Ex. 6.17). Likewise, in *The Young Pioneer's Suite*, the opening fanfare that commences the entire work is soon harmonised throughout the orchestra with an oscillating bassline (C–G) that comprises the material for the whole of the first movement.

Ex. 6.17: Part III, bars 13–17, extended melodic motif, bassoon and clarinet

The image shows a musical score for three instruments: Oboe, Clarinet, and Bassoon. The score is in 5/4 time and consists of five measures. The Oboe part has a melodic line with slurs and accents. The Clarinet part has a similar melodic line. The Bassoon part has a lower melodic line with a dynamic marking 'p' (piano) at the start of bar 15.

Symphony No. 1 must be highlighted as the only work from this early official era truly to straddle the distance between her mature style and this official style, despite the anticipatory hallmarks of her mature style in several scores from this early period. Symphony No. 1 includes a more austere musical language that transcends its position as a socialist realist work.

It must once more be stated that Ustvolskaya never wished these works to survive, and her refusal to compose any socialist realist works after 1961 certainly reinforces this standpoint. Ustvolskaya had to compose to live, and by refusing to compose the music for which, by the 1960s, she was well-known in composing circles, she was denying herself a living. With this in mind, it can hardly be held against Ustvolskaya as weakness of character that in her youngest years as a composer she indulged the authorities by completing such official works. When asked by Gladkova in a 1998 interview why these film scores were not included in her catalogue, Ustvolskaya replied:

These are works that I was compelled to write due to extreme material poverty, in order to help my family, which in those days were going through very hard times. These compositions can be distinguished at first sight from my real works, that's why they do not belong on the list.⁵⁸¹

One of the results of the Soviet cultural calamity was, of course, that young composers were forced to toe the party line, and Ustvolskaya was no exception. 1949–1961 saw the only period in Ustvolskaya's career when she

⁵⁸¹ Ustvolskaya, <<http://ustvolskaya.org/eng/>> (accessed on 17/02/2015).

compromised her own spiritual vigour and compositional independence in order to ensure her personal survival. But, later, Ustvol'skaya was categorically to forbid herself from engaging with such compromises to the extent that she even denied the existence of these earlier works. As composers were forced to comply with official demands Ustvol'skaya, in contrast to other composers (first of whom must be Shostakovich), somehow managed to evacuate her personality to produce scores in a wholly acceptable Soviet style, from which it was possible for her to be entirely disassociated later in her career.

Following the interruption of her compositional career, resulting in the lack of any new personal compositions between 1959 and 1964, Ustvol'skaya's musical style changed significantly, as she developed her 'mature style' which saw the emphasis firmly on the spiritual subject, and dramatic austerity. This change in style coincided with her decision to no longer write any official works. Yet this period of her life was also significant in terms of biography: 1961 saw the possible rekindling of her relationship with Shostakovich, and her rejection of his second marriage proposal. Ustvol'skaya made a conscious decision during these years to reject her youth in all its various manifestations: compromise with the state, the musical influence of Shostakovich, her personal relationship with Shostakovich and, most significantly, the impact that these factors had had on her musical development.

Furthermore, the 1950s saw a dramatic U-turn in the arts as the Soviet Union passed through continued political upheaval. The 20th Party Congress (14th–25th February 1956) initiated a debate – led by Khrushchev – as to the cultural and artistic decisions made during the Stalinist era.⁵⁸² The issue of the 1948 Resolution was not even addressed at the conference of Soviet Composers held in the following March, as time had already given its verdict on the composers denounced. Maximenkov observes:

⁵⁸² Schwarz, *op. cit.*, pp. 311–313.

At the conference of Soviet composers held in March 1957, the issue of Zhdanov's outlook was not raised. It did not need to be known, since time itself had returned the 'formalist' composers to renown. Khachaturian and Shostakovich had been elected to the Secretariat of the Board of the Union of Soviet Composers and had each been named a People's Artist of the USSR; Shostakovich had received this same award along with a second Order of Lenin; Prokofiev had posthumously received the first-ever Lenin Prize for his Seventh Symphony.⁵⁸³

Despite this, the Central Committee issued a further Resolution on 28th May 1958 entitled 'On the Correction of Errors in the Evaluation of the Operas "The Great Friendship", "Bogdan Khmelitsky", and "Heart and Soul"'. The overriding implication, of course, was the retraction of the earlier Resolution from a decade before (although the decree fell short of retracting the decree of 1948).⁵⁸⁴ A memorandum sent between several Soviet officials referred to the 'negative traits characteristic of the [Stalin] cult of personality' and a new Resolution was issued at once. The Second Composers' Congress proudly pronounced the liberalisation of musical art, and the removal of any creative limitations that may have previously existed.⁵⁸⁵ As part of his reforms, Khrushchev encouraged all composers progressively to expand their approach to music, but he had somewhat overlooked an ingredient that could be considered integral to achieving this: education. Soviet composition students had been so far removed from any foreign music or progressive attitudes that it did not prove quite so easy for them to produce music at the cutting-edge of the international scene. In response, Khrushchev signed a cultural agreement between the Soviet Union and the United States of America that provided opportunities for cultural exchange. In autumn 1958, a group of American composers (including Roger Sessions (1896–1985), Roy Harris (1898–1979) and Ulysses Kay (1917–1995)) visited the Soviet Union as part of this cultural exchange programme. Upon their visit, these composers were exposed to the music of Ustvolskaya, although reportedly did not look upon it favourably.⁵⁸⁶

⁵⁸³ Maximenkov, op. cit., p. 16.

⁵⁸⁴ According to an account by musicologist Sabinina, Shostakovich reacted to the title of this release with significant agitation, exclaiming: 'Correct it! No, nothing should be corrected, the only thing is to revoke the Decree, revoke it!'. Elizabeth Wilson, *Shostakovich: A Life Remembered*, op. cit., pp. 293–294.

⁵⁸⁵ Schwarz, op. cit., p. 305.

⁵⁸⁶ Ross, op. cit..

Furthermore, Spring 1960 saw visits by Aaron Copland (1900–1990) and Lukas Foss (1922–2009). In return, five Soviet composers (including Shostakovich) travelled to the United States of America. The American composers involved in such exchanges brought scores, recordings, books, periodicals and – most importantly – knowledge of musical activity from the remainder of the world, an exchange that was intensified by the Third Congress of Soviet Composers in 1962, where these issues in music were openly discussed for the first time. During this period, Soviet musicians, for the first time since the mid-1930s, were able to easily access – and listen to – non-Soviet music (although there were still some foreign composers deemed unacceptable: Schoenberg, for instance, was still officially banned).⁵⁸⁷ The 100th anniversary of Mahler was celebrated by performances of his symphonies. A large number of so-called ‘closed’ performances (accessible only to professionals) took place both in Moscow and Leningrad, which allowed leading critics and composers to become aware of existing Western musical trends. However, as claimed by Copland following his visit, much of the Soviet music to which he was exposed demonstrated no evidence of familiarity with twentieth century trends; the works considered by Soviets as the most ‘controversial’ were stylistically close to Prokofiev’s *Scythian Suite* (1914) and some early Bartók. Copland was, however, surprised to hear some authentic American jazz played in the jazz clubs of Leningrad, Moscow and Riga, although soon after his visit, in the spring of 1963, Khrushchev denounced jazz.⁵⁸⁸

Although the 1958 Resolution offered some progress in terms of the liberalisation of artistic affairs, it brought with it its frustrations: as well as stopping short of nullifying the 1948 decree, it brought with it little reform. It even stated that the 1948 decree, ‘had played, on the whole, a positive role in the subsequent development of Soviet music’.⁵⁸⁹ Schwarz describes the article the editor of *Pravda* was officially required to publish to accompany the resolution, as the resolution itself could not include the finer points of the artistic situation:

⁵⁸⁷ In conversation with Ivashkin, London, January 2012.

⁵⁸⁸ Schwarz, op. cit., pp. 332–333.

⁵⁸⁹ Schwarz, *ibid.*, p. 311.

This editorial appeared on 8 June 1958 – a rambling, tortuous and pedestrian restatement of the 1948 principles that were deemed essentially ‘correct’; the errors, admitted with reluctance, consisted merely in the ‘unjustifiably severe’ evaluations of Soviet music. At the same time, however, *Pravda* was still concerned about the ‘alien and unsound phenomena in music’ and warned against ‘indiscriminate rehabilitation of all the works justly criticized’. Such ‘revisionist attempts’ were resolutely rebuffed.⁵⁹⁰

The decree was, however, to be received by the music community with immediate satisfaction: it restored the names of formerly disgraced composers (Prokofiev and Myakovsky), it went some way to restore the image of Soviet music on the international music platform, and it introduced an improved climate of amenability between the party and musicians. The latest availability of new musical resources was inevitably to have a huge impact on young composers, and Ustvolskaya was no exception. For the first time, students who had graduated as part of the Soviet music system were openly presented with information regarding serialism and dodecaphony.⁵⁹¹ The co-existence of the two opposing strands of musical composition became a great concern to Soviet officials and, referring to the new music being written by Soviet composers, Khrushchev gravely warned: ‘music without melody gives rise to nothing but irritation ... [the regime] flatly rejects this cacophonous music, as our people can’t use this garbage as a tool of their ideology’.⁵⁹² The state’s control of artistic affairs was still very evident to the visiting delegates. After a visit to the Soviet Union in 1960, Arthur Jacobs observed:

⁵⁹⁰ Schwarz, *ibid.*, p. 312.

⁵⁹¹ At this time, a new exhibition of abstract painting and sculpture opened at the Manège in Moscow, a feat that incensed Khrushchev and resulted in a further condemnation from the cultural ministry of the ‘incorrect tendencies’ in art. The effect of this was that the control over all the arts was immediately, once again, reinforced.

⁵⁹² Schwarz, *op. cit.*, p. 418.

As composers, Soviet musicians were still straightjacketed by ideology imposed from the top. Radical experiment is frowned on ... and condemned as 'avant-gardismus' by the group of middle-aged-to-elderly composers of the Composers' Union – that mythological monster created in Moscow to represent all non-tonal experiments.⁵⁹³

What this reform did reinforce, however, was the temperamental nature of all Soviet reforms. Maximenkov summarises the impact of the 1958 Resolution:

The 1958 resolution was meaningless in its immediate practical importance: the 'formalist' composers had long been exonerated, if only by default; those who survived travelled abroad and were elected to leadership of the Union of Soviet Composers. But revisiting the 1948 resolution had much larger symbolic repercussions than any literal message embedded in the short text. It was the first – and last – public example of the abolition of a despised decision from the Stalin era of the arts ...The cultural Thaw – the liberalisation of the arts under Khrushchev – had its ups and downs, its contradictions and limitations, but it played an important role in the opening up of Soviet culture.⁵⁹⁴

The 1958 Resolution and the 'Khrushchev Thaw' came at the end of the decade in which Ustvolskaya had been most active as an official composer. The end of Ustvolskaya's Soviet career also coincided with this slight loosening of official control. Even if little had changed practically in terms of the state's requirements of composers, the questions raised by the 1958 Resolution would certainly have consumed the mind of the young composer. It is perhaps not a coincidence that the dramatic, permanent change in Ustvolskaya's musical style (following the completion of her *Grand Duet*), her final official work (*Song of Praise*), a pause in her creative process (no personal work was written between 1959 and 1964) and her self-removal from the orbit of Shostakovich, occurred in the wake of the changes that came about in 1958 Soviet culture.

As has been discussed, friends and allies of Ustvolskaya staunchly refuse to accept that she took any interest in the state of politics and the (detrimental) effect it was to have on culture, nor let it have any tangible effect upon her music. But is it really possible her immediate political situation was to have little or no effect upon her life and music? If not, Ustvolskaya would have to be

⁵⁹³ Arthur Jacobs, 'Music and Myth in Moscow', *New Statesman*, 21/05/1960.

⁵⁹⁴ Maximenkov, op. cit., p. 20.

the only figure working in Soviet arts upon whom it had no effect: an entirely improbable prospect. In the mid-twentieth-century, Soviet arts were entirely directed by the whims of the regime, the upshots of which would have been inescapable. One must look no further than the premieres of her works as an indication of the ways the Thaw would have touched her personally: Suite for Orchestra – 1957, Symphonic Poem No. 1 (The Hero's Exploit) – 1958, Sonata for Violin and Piano – 1961, First Symphony – 1966, Piano Concerto – 1966, Piano Sonata No. 2 – 1966, Clarinet Trio, Twelve Preludes for Piano – 1967, and Duet for Violin and Piano – 1968.

As has been demonstrated, Ustvol'skaya's change in compositional style correlated with her no longer choosing to compose any official works. Ustvol'skaya, on the surface, did all she could to remove any evidence of the Soviet music system in her work. As a consequence, even these works are largely defined by the Soviet demands as her later style could not possibly have arisen if not for the socialist realist style in her early works that went before it. Bloom's idea of 'The Anxiety of Influence' has already been explored, but here it is Bloom's fifth ratio that has relevance with regard to Ustvol'skaya's relationship with the state. Dubbed *Askesis*,⁵⁹⁵ Bloom explained the phenomenon where a composer (or, in his case, poet) moves towards a state of solitude, or self-purgation, from any primary influence or origin. By the 1970s and the development of her mature style, Ustvol'skaya simply curtailed any sense of compromise with, or influence from, the state.

This truncation of the Soviet influence does not, however, negate the influence that it has over the composer. In *Askesis*, the latter simply could not exist without the existence of the precursor itself. Ustvol'skaya's isolation, and musical absolutism, is only defined in regard to the Soviet music system: the music simply could not have arisen from a different place or time. The totalitarianism of the regime was, in essence, reflected in Ustvol'skaya's totalitarian response to the regime. In summary, by denying her official career, Ustvol'skaya continues this tradition from within her own boundaries, as her denial is largely based on her original obligations.

⁵⁹⁵ Bloom, op. cit., pp. 115–138.

Final Thoughts: The Paradox of Galina Ustvolskaya

Chapter 7

Chapters 1–6 have attempted to identify, chronicle and investigate the forces and influences that shaped and propelled the music of Soviet composer Galina Ustvolskaya. As a Russian composer who had successfully been through the established musical education system, Ustvolskaya was ensnared in the midst of Russian culture, a professional figure on the St Petersburg musical scene. Her education with Shostakovich undoubtedly brought her music into the orbit of his influence, to say nothing of the influences thus brought, through him, from the entire western art music canon. In particular, there has been an exploration of the influence of Bach's polyphony and Mahler's spiritual tragic-dramatic catharsis on Ustvolskaya's music (both directly, and through Shostakovich). Aside from this western influence, Ustvolskaya was fully aware of a sense of Russian lineage in contemporary Soviet music. Her inclusion of aspects of *znamenny raspev* and quasi-pagan rites not only provides a presence of Ancient Rus in her work, but reflects the ideological ideas of Glinka, Musorgsky, Rimsky-Korsakov and (more recently) Stravinsky, who sought to combine a sense of 'Russianness' with Western musical genres and the instruments they deployed. Russian philosophers and musical commentators (Losev, Asafiev, Stasov, Trubetskoy) were preoccupied with discovering exactly what it is to be Russian, and these fashionable ideas were powerful motivators behind the Soviet avant-garde.

There are also strong influences upon Ustvolskaya from outside the musical world. The Russian artists' sense of 'otherness' has always saturated Russian literature, as writers such as Dostoevsky and Gogol sought to explore what it was to be Russian in their work. But Ustvolskaya, Dostoevsky and Gogol had one further thing in common: the idea of the St Petersburg artist. All strove to convey the unique struggle of the people of St Petersburg, and the horrors they had witnessed in their city during their respective lifetimes. But Ustvolskaya was not merely faced with influences from her native country; other forces from the West were also to have an influence on her: the novels of Mann concerning the struggling artist and musical crisis, the philosophical and

spiritual importance placed on music by Schopenhauer, and the nationalistic ideas behind the Eurasian movement in Western Europe all have their echoes in Ustvol'skaya's music.

The political situation – unique to Russia – imposed further restrictions and limitations upon cultural output that would have undoubtedly affected Ustvol'skaya's compositions. Although the power of the regime was responsible for Ustvol'skaya's earlier, more official compositions, it was also to have an impact on her more personal work. The authorities were directly responsible for the fact that some of her compositions were not given their premieres for more than twenty years, but also, in the midst of this cultural calamity, it would seem that Ustvol'skaya attempted to escape the constraints of her time and place as a form of political and creative protest, by including some tangible clandestine messages. The fact that spirituality was so repressed in the Soviet Union seems to have fuelled a national spiritual compulsion, which is largely responsible for shaping the music of many twentieth-century composers, and Ustvol'skaya is no anomaly.

These tangible, identifiable influential forces reveal to us exactly how Ustvol'skaya's compositions came about, yet one cannot help but feel that the full picture is not, as yet, visible. This investigation into the influences imposed upon her throws up as many questions as it answers, not least because of the various contradictions it presents: Galina Ustvol'skaya is a contradiction, an oxymoron, a paradox. How can her music be chamber music, and be, at the same time, symphonic? How can she have held Shostakovich so dear, and then denounced him so slanderously later in life? How can Ustvol'skaya deploy Western instruments and musical genres to convey an ancient, pagan Russia? A final enquiry must at the very least illuminate these contradictions, and suggest their place in Ustvol'skaya's world.

The most immediate paradox can be seen in Ustvol'skaya's personal behaviour, and chosen lifestyle. Despite the hermitic existence she settled on, away from the Soviet composing community, she has achieved impressive international recognition. It is, rather inversely, perhaps *because* of her strange existence that she has drawn more attention from the international musicological community. This can also be seen on a more local level. Ustvol'skaya infamously adopted something of a blunt manner towards her

fellow composers, students and performers of her work, yet she still managed to captivate a hoard of loyal followers who defend her music widely – and aggressively – to this day.⁵⁹⁶ Likewise, Ustvolskaya insisted that she only taught for the money, however her students testify to her great skills as a teacher, and suggest that she revelled in this role. Yet her loyal followers were still not immune to her temperamental nature. Withdrawing dedications and releasing public statements regarding fellow musicians she once held dear is a further example of Ustvolskaya's volatile behaviour. Furthermore, Ustvolskaya and her followers insisted she was not highly educated, and remained distant from the intelligentsia of Soviet life. Ustvolskaya told reporters in Bern that she did not know the names of, for example, Malevich and Tarkovsky. According to Bagrenin, this was indeed true: 'She did not know such names as Schoenberg, Webern, Satie. She was self-sufficient and was not particularly interested to hear the works of her contemporaries.'⁵⁹⁷ Ustvolskaya was perhaps not as widely read, or did not know as much music as other composers, because of her deliberate decision to disregard other artists as readily as she would choose to be exposed to them.

A further dichotomy can be seen in Ustvolskaya's career path as a composer. Chapter 6 charts Ustvolskaya's journey as a Soviet composer, a position she later determinedly undermined, and distanced herself from in every possible way, even to the extent of denying its very existence. Her musical style in her later career directly opposes that which she adopted in her Soviet works. The resolute spirituality found in her later works (and indeed her discourse surrounding her music and personal philosophy) diametrically opposes this early style. Even her more personal works of the 1940s and 1950s that were not in an overtly Soviet style and incorporated ideas of her emerging spirituality (and were included in the aforementioned catalogues of the 1990s) articulate the journey of compositional change on which Ustvolskaya would later embark as she got rid of any form of early lyricism, and her musical language developed to juxtapose this earlier style with her more brutal mature works. Ustvolskaya even contradicted herself in terms of which works she

⁵⁹⁶ This loyal circle includes many famous names: her friend and colleague, Suslin; composer Tishchenko; husband Bagrenin; Bakhmin and pianist de Leeuw, to name a few.

⁵⁹⁷ Bagrenin, via e-mail, translated and received via Bakhmin, 09/06/2010.

viewed as of sufficient quality to be included in said catalogues. When asked why Ustvol'skaya changed her mind to include several early works (such as *The Dream of Stepan Razin*) in her revised Sikorski catalogue, Bagrenin replied: 'She was changing her mind very slowly during many years and finally decided that those works are good enough to be included in the catalogue. She was very demanding to her output.'⁵⁹⁸ This is in contrast to the reason given to the author by Duffek at Sikorski (see Chapter 6).

A further point of confusion caused by Ustvol'skaya's belligerence is her direct confrontation with analysis and musicologists themselves. She claimed that analysis of her music was 'all nonsense, made up by unimaginative musicologists who feel a need for organisation...[who] call her minimalist, refer to Webern, and find old-Russian or even old-Indian folk music in her work.'⁵⁹⁹ Nevertheless, as has been discussed in Chapter 5, vestiges of *znamenny raspev* are constantly present in her compositions: Ustvol'skaya used the medium of highly refined Western chamber instruments to convey the simplicity of folk music and chant. If Ustvol'skaya's assertion that her music superhumanly bypasses any cultural interaction is to be believed, then it can only be supposed that these references to chant are intuitive rather than consciously embraced, not a wholly implausible possibility. Either way, Orthodox musical language is unquestionably (either intuitively or consciously) employed as a device in order to achieve both a spiritual experience and a restoration of the clarity of nature that preceded any cultural appropriation.

In terms of permitting musicologists to pursue analysis of her work and the theory behind it, Bagrenin is now left with an impossible situation. Should he defend Ustvol'skaya's wish for no one to investigate her music? Or should he allow the promotion of her music, by permitting those who wish to be closer to her music to enquire further?⁶⁰⁰ It would seem that Bagrenin has, rather reluctantly but to the relief of those who wish to pursue analysis and

⁵⁹⁸ Bagrenin, via e-mail, translated and received via Bakhmin, 09/06/2010.

⁵⁹⁹ Derks, op. cit., pp. 32–33.

⁶⁰⁰ Very little detailed musical analysis can be found in the literature surrounding Ustvol'skaya's music although Lindsay Murrell's monograph goes some way to fill this void by examining Ustvol'skaya's motivic development as her music language evolved. Lindsay Murrell, *Galina Ustvol'skaya (1919–2006): Analytical Approach to the Pitch Content of Selected Compositions*, PhD diss., The University of Western Ontario, 2013.

musicological investigation, opted for the latter, to prevent the abandonment of her music entirely. Although Bagrenin does this with great reluctance, he himself chooses to whom he will grant permission to pay him a visit, or gain access to the wealth of information he alone holds. He is not particularly forthcoming with information regarding Ustvolskaya, and stays true to her own ideas and the answers she herself gave to musicologists during interviews. For example, when I asked him: ‘Did Ustvolskaya know any Old Believers, or have any knowledge of their lifestyle?’ Bagrenin replied simply: ‘No’.⁶⁰¹

Ustvolskaya’s spiritual life also shows evidence of contradictions: her insistence that her instrumental music was best performed in a church contradicts the Orthodox tradition of permitting only vocal music as part of the liturgy; Ustvolskaya did not believe in God as expressed by organised religion, yet she wanted her music to be performed in a church, included references to the Orthodox chant, embraced the idea of music as iconic and incorporated religious subtitles often straight from the liturgy. These subtitles are significant further still in terms of these paradoxes as they are – perhaps surprisingly – taken from the *Catholic* liturgy (from the West), rather than reflecting her Eastern Orthodox empathies and cultural context. Theologically, her music is obsessed with suffering, sin, darkness and tragedy, yet offers the contrasting ideas of absolution and redemption from Man’s transgressions. She uses an exaggerated *physical* language to express its antithesis, the *spiritual*.

Ustvolskaya also epitomises the tension between East and West as a by-product of the dualities already mentioned. She inherited her medium from the West (in terms of instrumentation, genre, polyphony, etc.), yet incorporated Eastern aspects (chant, iconicity, Russian paganism and folklore etc.) that place her music firmly in the Russian art music tradition (following the example of Musorgsky, Stravinsky etc.). The official compositions she composed for the Soviet authorities actively promoted ideas of a victorious Russia, and elevated folkloristic content. In both her official and personal works, western art music has been reinvented by Ustvolskaya as she reverts to Russia’s ancient origins to direct the predominantly western context from which she writes. This combination of East and West also incorporates political substance:

⁶⁰¹ Bagrenin, via e-mail, translated and received via Bakhmin, 09/06/2010.

Ustvolskaya demonstrates that musical answers cannot be discovered in either unadulterated western tradition, or in the Russian tradition. To Ustvolskaya, only a return to Russianness in its purest form reworked as contemporary thought imparts the ideological truth of a corrupt world.

Russia's position between the 'cultural' West and the 'natural' East also provides this investigation with a further consideration as Ustvolskaya revisits nature (through her interest in folk traditions and the vocal quality of many of her instrumental lines) in order to sanctify humanly imposed values (i.e. cultural traditions). Nature has become the symbol of an uncorrupted culture, and resultantly reflects Ustvolskaya's opinion of spirituality as an uncorrupted religion. This has wider political resonance: nature and spirituality are both free from any political restrictions and are therefore exalted appropriately. This is an almost minimalist trend, in which cultural norms are obliterated in order to return to the rules of an unadulterated universe.

In terms of her musical language, the short, horizontal lines that comprise her polyphony are set side by side with the vertical clusters that arise as a result. Often the overall effect means that the listener is only aware of the timbral clusters, rather than of the motivic polyphony that actually is the true basis of the work. The instrumentation she uses seems to contradict the titles of the works (and strange combinations of instruments even at times seem to contradict each other), and the simplicity of the crotchet repetition belies the complexity of the compositional process. Ustvolskaya's music is avant-garde, progressive and innovative, yet firmly rooted in the Russian tradition, and even reaches back to a time before the introduction of 'organised' music.

Ustvolskaya's music is personal yet universal, violent yet redemptive, Eastern yet Western, complex yet simple. It concerns an objective treatment of an intensely emotional subject. It stands alone, yet it speaks for humanity and it is possible to discover within it a multitude of influences. Full of contradictions and hidden complexities, both Ustvolskaya's music and life are impossible to summarise without finding an argument contradictory to one's observations. The dualities that prevail in the work of Ustvolskaya on numerous ideological and structural levels render her work immediately identifiable and distinguishable: understanding the nature of these contradictions and how they are revealed contributes to our comprehension of any given example of her

music and its overall coherence. On a macrocosmic level these various tensions exist between all musical languages and their extra-musical content, yet the existence of these parallels and paradoxes is acutely present in Ustvolskaya's work.

The delayed institutionalisation of Russian art music began the process of establishing what is still a very young art, even now concerned with the direction it should take. The influence of Soviet demands on art and culture was to dramatically alter the course of musical development too. The resolutions of 1932, 1948 and 1958, coupled with the artistic direction of the Association of Proletarian Musicians, meant that Western European, avant-garde music was viciously suppressed, and Russian music simply could not develop in the same direction. This naturally created a further 'difference' between the Russian tradition and musical development in the West. It was left to Soviet composers to progress independently, segregated from twentieth-century developments to comply simultaneously with such stringent aesthetic and ideological control, rendering it inexorably 'different' from composition arising in other parts of Europe. It is also this sense of 'otherness' that Ustvolskaya epitomised. By embracing the concept that certain characteristics are innate in certain groups, one is enabled to discern the necessary identification of Ustvolskaya's individual style. It is through Ustvolskaya's music that the familiar myth (referred to in the introduction) is dispelled: we can thus firmly be assured that the classification of the 'Other' or the 'Outside' is certainly *not* the tacit equivalent of inferior.

So exactly what is it that is identifiable as Ustvolskaya's individual style? The answer to that lies directly in the title of this final chapter. Galina Ustvolskaya, as person and as professional, was a creature of tremendous paradox and, as a result, deviated from established conventions in every dimension: location, religion and culture. The consequence of these constantly perceivable dichotomies was her distinctive idiosyncratic musical output, full of tension and intensity, a force that managed to propel the impetus behind her work further still. Ustvolskaya was a unique composer who operated in exceptional circumstances over a number of years; the combination of her desire to be impervious to other twentieth-century musical activity, and the collaborative effect of the inexorable influences discussed in this thesis

rendered her music complex and severe, and, ultimately, permitted the firm formation of her own distinctive voice.

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Research from this thesis has also been presented by the author at the following platforms:

- January 2007: RMA Research Students' Conference, University of Bristol
- January 2007: Religious Tradition and Innovation in the Post-Soviet World, Cumberland Lodge, Windsor.
- Feb 2007: RMA/BASEES Russian and Eastern European Study day, RSAMD, Glasgow
- May 2007: Russian Music After the Thaw, BASEES Panelist, University of Cambridge
- June 2007: Composing and Chanting in the Orthodox Church, International Society of Orthodox Church Music Bi-annual Conference, University of Joensuu, Finland
- January 2008: RMA Research Student's Conference, University of Surrey
- May 2008: Centre for Russian Music Concert and Lecture Series, Goldsmiths College, University of London
- Feb 2009: (M)other Russia, Centre for Russian Music, Goldsmiths College, University of London
- Feb 2009: CSWG Seminar, Department of Sociology, University of Warwick
- June 2009: Church, State and Nation in Orthodox Church Music, International Society of Orthodox Church Music Bi-annual Conference, University of Joensuu, Finland
- June 2009: Ustvol'skaya's 90th Birthday Celebrations, Centre for Russian Music, Goldsmiths College, University of London
- July 2009: Sixth Biennial International Conference on Music Since 1900, University of Keele
- July 2009: Joint Annual Conference of the Society of Musicology in Ireland and the RMA, The Royal Irish Academy of Music, Dublin
- Nov 2009: 1948 and All That, CRASSH, Cambridge
- May 2011: Oestvol'skaja Symposium, Amsterdam
- March 2013: Orthodoxy, Music, Politics and Art in Contemporary Russia and Eastern Europe, London

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