

A. ZHDANOV'S SPEECH
AT THE DISCUSSION ON SOVIET MUSIC
IN THE CENTRAL COMMITTEE OF THE C.P.S.U.(B.)

Comrades! First of all, permit me to make a few remarks on the character of the discussion which has unfolded here.

The general appraisal of the position in the realm of musical creation is that it is none too good. True, the speakers have expressed various shades of opinion. Some said that things were particularly bad organisationally, and called attention to the unsatisfactory state of criticism and self-criticism and the incorrect management of musical affairs, especially in the Composers' Union. Others, while agreeing with the criticism of organisational methods and regime, stressed the unsatisfactory position with regard to the ideological trend of Soviet music. Still others have tried to minimize the urgency of the matter, or pass over unpleasant questions in silence. However for all these differences of shade in appraising the present situation, the gist of the discussion has been that things are not so good.

I have no intention of introducing dissonance or atonality into this appraisal, although "atonality" is now the fashion. (*Laughter, animation in the hall.*) Things really are in a bad way... worse even, in my opinion, than was stated here. I have no intention of denying the achievements of Soviet music. Of course, there have been such. But if we stop to think what achievements we could and should have had in Soviet music, if, also, we compare our successes in music with our achievements in other ideological spheres, we have to admit that the former are quite insignificant. In the case of literature, for instance, some of the big journals are at present hard put to find space in their coming numbers for all the material, perfectly suitable for publication, that has accumulated in their editorial folders. I hardly think any of the speakers could boast of such an "overflow" in music. There has been progress in the realm of the cinema and theatre, but in the realm of music there has not been any perceptible progress.

Music has lagged behind – such is the gist of all the speeches made here. The situation in both the Composers' Union and the Committee on Arts is decidedly abnormal. Little has been said about the Committee on Arts; it has been insufficiently criticised. At any rate, the Composers' Union has been hauled over the coals at much greater length and more sharply. Yet the Committee on Arts has played a very unseemly role. While pretending to stand fast for the realistic trend in music, the Committee has done its best to foster the formalistic trend, raising its exponents on high and so helping to disorganise and introduce ideological confusion into our composers' ranks. Itself ignorant and incompetent as concerns problems of music, the Committee has drifted along with the current, in the wake of the formalistically inclined composers.

The Organisational Committee of the Composers' Union has been compared here to a monastery or a body of generals without an army. Both these statements can well go unchallenged. If the destiny of Soviet music is becoming the prerogative of an extremely narrow circle of prominent composers and critics (the latter chosen on the basis of how fervently they support their chiefs, thus creating a suffocating atmosphere of adulation around these composers), if creative discussion is absent, if the stuffy, musty practice of classifying composers as first and second rate has become firmly established in the Composers' Union, if the dominant style of its creative meetings is polite silence or reverent praise of the chosen few, if the leadership of the Organisational Committee keeps aloof from the mass of composers – then it cannot be denied that the situation on our musical "Mt. Olympus" has indeed grown alarming.

Special mention must be made of the perverse trend of criticism and the absence of creative discussion in the Composers' Union. Since there is no creative discussion, no criticism and self-criticism, there can be no progress, either. Creative discussion and objective, independent criticism – this has already become axiomatic – are the most important pre-requisites of creative growth. When criticism and creative discussion are lacking, the wellsprings of growth run dry and a hothouse atmosphere of stuffiness and

stagnation is created. Yet our composers could need nothing less than this. No wonder people participating in a discussion on musical problems for the first time find it strange that such irreconcilable contradictions can exist side by side as the very conservative organisational regime of the Composers' Union and the supposedly ultra-progressive views (in the ideological creative sphere) of its present leaders. We know that the leadership of the Union has inscribed such highly promising slogans on its banner as a call for innovations, rejection of outworn tradition, as the fight against "epigonism", and so on. But it is strange that the very people who wish to appear extremely radical and even arch-revolutionary in the matter of a creative platform, who pose as iconoclasts... that these same people prove extremely backward and unamenable to any novelty and change in so far as their participation in the activities of the Composers' Union is concerned, that in their methods of work and leadership they are conservative, and in organisational questions often gladly subservient to bad traditions and despised "epigonism", cultivating the stalest and mouldiest methods of leadership of the life and activity of their creative organisation.

It is not difficult to explain why this is so. If bombastic talk about an allegedly new trend in Soviet music is accompanied by actions which can by no means be called progressive, this in itself warrants legitimate doubt as to the progressive nature of the ideological creative tenets being implanted by such reactionary methods.

The organisational aspect of any matter is very important, as you all know quite well. The creative organisations of our composers and musicians apparently need a good airing. There is need of a fresh breeze to clear the atmosphere in these organisations, that normal conditions for the development of creative work may be established.

However, the organisational question, important as it is, is not the basic question. The basic question is that of the trend of Soviet music. In the course it has taken our discussion here has somewhat slurred over this question, and this is not right. Just as in music you seek the lucid musical phrase, so in the question of the trend of musical

development we must also achieve clarity. To the question "Is it a matter of two trends in music?" the discussion has given a perfectly definite answer: yes, precisely that is the matter. Although some comrades have avoided calling things by their own names, and there has been quite a bit of shadow-boxing, it is clear that a struggle is taking place between the trends and that attempts are being made to replace one trend by another.

Some of the comrades maintained that there are no grounds for bringing up the question of a struggle between trends, that no changes of a qualitative nature have taken place, and that all that is happening is the further development of the heritage of the classical school under Soviet conditions. They said that no revision of the principles of classical music is being made, and that consequently there was nothing to argue or get excited about. They made it seem that it was merely a question of correcting something here and there, of isolated cases of absorption with technique alone, of isolated naturalistic mistakes, and so on. Since there has been this kind of camouflaging, the question of the fight between the two trends needs fuller treatment. Of course, it is not merely a question of making a few corrections, of there being a leak in the conservatory roof, and the need of mending it, in which need we cannot but agree with Comrade Shebalin. It is not only in the conservatory roof that there is a hole; that can be readily fixed. There is a much bigger hole in the foundation of Soviet music. There cannot be two opinions on this score. All the speakers have pointed out that a definite group of composers is now playing the leading role in the creative activity of the Composers' Union. The composers in question are Comrades Shostakovich, Prokofieff, Miaskovsky, Khachaturian, Popov, Kabalevsky, Shebalin. Is there anyone else you think should be added to this group?

Voice from the floor: Shaporin.

Zhdanov: In speaking of the leading group which holds all the strings and keys of *The Executive Committee on Creative Work*, these are the names most frequently mentioned. Let us consider these comrades the chief, leading figures of the

formalistic trend in music. And this trend is fundamentally wrong.

The comrades just named have also spoken here, and declared that they too are dissatisfied with the absence of a critical atmosphere in the Composers' Union, with their being praised too highly, that they are aware of a certain weakening of their contact with the main bulk of composers, and with the public, and so on. But it was hardly necessary to wait for a not quite or not completely successful opera to come out with all these truths. These confessions might have been made much earlier. The point is that for the leading group of our formalistically inclined composers the regime which has existed until now in our musical organisations was, to put it mildly, "not altogether unpleasant". (*Applause.*) It took a meeting in the Central Committee of the Party for the comrades to discover the fact that this regime has its negative sides. However that may be, until this meeting in the Central Committee, none of them thought of changing the state of affairs in the Composers' Union. The forces of "traditionalism" and "epigonism" functioned smoothly. It has been said here that the time has come for a radical change. It is impossible not to concede this, inasmuch as the commanding posts in Soviet music are held by the comrades named, inasmuch as it has been proven that attempts to criticise them would have resulted, as Comrade Zakharov put it, in an explosion, in the immediate mobilisation of all forces against this criticism, we must conclude that it was precisely these comrades who created that same unbearable hothouse atmosphere of stagnation and back-slapping that they are now inclined to declare undesirable.

The leading comrades in the Composers' Union alleged here that there is no oligarchy in the Composers' Union. If so, the question arises: why do they hold so tenaciously to the leading posts in the Union? Is it that they like domination for the sake of domination? In other words, have people taken power into their hands because they enjoy power for the sake of power, because the administrative appetite got the better of them, and people simply want to lord it over others, like Vladimir Galitsky in *Prince Igor*?

(*Laughter.*) Or is this domination exercised for the sake of a definite trend in music? I think we can discard the first hypothesis; the second is more correct. We have no reason to say that leadership in the Union is not connected with a trend. No such charge can be made, for instance, against Shostakovich. *It follows, then, that it was domination for the sake of the trend.*

And, indeed, we are faced with a very acute, although outwardly concealed struggle between two trends in Soviet music. One trend represents the healthy, progressive principle in Soviet music, based upon recognition of the tremendous role of the classical heritage, and, in particular, the traditions of the Russian musical school, on the combination of lofty idea content in music, its truthfulness and realism, with profound, organic ties with the people and their music and songs – all this combined with a high degree of professional mastery. The other trend is that of formalism, which is alien to Soviet art, and is marked by rejection of the classical heritage under the guise of seeming novelty, by rejection of popular music, by rejection of service to the people in preference for catering to the highly individualistic emotions of a small group of select aesthetes.

This latter trend substitutes music that is false, vulgar and often simply pathological, for natural and beautiful human music. At the same time it is typical of this latter trend that it avoids frontal attacks, preferring to conceal its revisionistic activity behind a mask of seeming agreement with the fundamental tenets of socialist realism. Such "contraband" methods are, of course, not new. There are plenty of examples in history of revisionism under the guise of seeming agreement with the fundamental tenets of the teaching that is being revised. The more necessary is it, then, to expose the true essence of this other trend, and the harm it is doing to the development of Soviet music.

Let us examine the question of attitude towards the classical heritage, for instance. Swear as the above-mentioned composers may that they stand with both feet on the soil of the classical heritage, there is nothing to prove that the adherents of the formalistic school are perpetuating and developing the traditions of classical music. Any listener

will tell you that the work of the Soviet composers of the formalistic trend is totally unlike classical music. Classical music is characterised by its truthfulness and realism, by the ability to attain to unity of brilliant artistic form with profound content, to combine great mastery with simplicity and comprehensibility. Classical music in general, and Russian classical music in particular, are strangers to formalism and crude naturalism. They are marked by lofty idea content, based upon recognition of the musical art of the peoples as the wellspring of classical music, by profound respect and love for the people, their music and songs.

What a step back from the highroad of musical development our formalists make when, undermining the bulwarks of real music, they compose false and ugly music, permeated with idealistic emotions, alien to the wide masses of people, and catering not to the millions of Soviet people, but to the few, to a score or more of chosen ones, to the "elite"! How this differs from Glinka, Chaikovsky, Rimsky-Korsakov, Dargomyjsky and Mussorgsky, who regarded the ability to express the spirit and character of the people in their works as the foundation of their artistic growth. Neglect of the demands of the people, their spirit and art means that the formalistic trend in music is definitely anti-popular in character.

It is simply a terrible thing if the "theory" that "we will be understood fifty or a hundred years hence", that "our contemporaries may not understand us, but posterity will" is current among a certain section of Soviet composers. If this altitude has become habitual, it is a very dangerous habit.

This type of reasoning means isolation from the people. If I – writer, artist, man of letters or Party worker – cannot count upon being understood by my contemporaries, for whom do I live and work? This can only lead to spiritual vacuity, to a blind alley. It is said that certain sycophantic musical critics are whispering this kind of "consolation" to our composers especially now. But can composers listen to this advice coolly and not feel like stigmatizing such advisers at least in a court of honour?

Remember how the classics felt about the needs of the people. We have begun to forget in what striking language

the composers of the *Big Five*,* and the great music critic Stasov, who was affiliated with them, spoke of the popular element in music. We have begun to forget Glinka's wonderful words about the ties between the people and artists: "Music is created by the people and we artists only arrange it." We are forgetting that the great master did not stand aloof from any genres if these genres helped to bring music closer to the wide masses of people. You, on the other hand, hold aloof even from such a genre as the opera; you regard the opera as secondary, opposing it to instrumental symphony music, to say nothing of the fact that you look down on song, choral and concert music, considering it a disgrace to stoop to it and satisfy the demands of the people. Yet Mussorgsky adapted the music of the *Hopak*, while Glinka used the *Komarinsky* for one of his finest compositions. Evidently, we shall have to admit that the landlord Glinka, the official Serov and the aristocrat Stasov were more democratic than you. This is paradoxical, but it is a fact. Solemn vows that you are all for popular music are not enough. If you are, why do you make so little use of folk melodies in your musical works? Why are the defects, which were criticised long ago by Serov, when he said that "learned", that is, professional, music was developing parallel with and independently of folk music, repeating themselves? Can we really say that our instrumental symphony music is developing in close interaction with folk music – be it song, concert or choral music? No, we cannot say that. On the contrary, a gulf has unquestionably arisen here as the result of the underestimation of folk music by our symphony composers. Let me remind you of how Serov defined his attitude to folk music. I am referring to his article *The Music of South Russian Songs* in which he said: "Folk songs, as musical organisms, are by no means the work of individual musical talents, but the productions of a whole nation; their entire structure distinguishes them from the artificial music written in conscious imitation of

* The *Big Five* – a group of Russian composers who came forth in the 1860's: Balakirev, Mussorgsky, Borodin, Rimsky-Korsakov, Cui.

previous examples, written as the products of definite schools, science, routine and reflexes. They are flowers that grow naturally in a given locale, that have appeared in the world of themselves and sprung to full beauty without the least thought of authorship or composition, and consequently, with little resemblance to the hothouse products of learned compositional activity. That is why the naivete of creation, and that (as Gogol aptly expressed it in *Dead Souls*) lofty wisdom of simplicity which is the main charm and main secret of every artistic work are most strikingly manifest in them.

Just as the lily, in its glorious and chaste beauty, outshines the brilliance of brocades and precious stones, so folk music, thanks to its very child-like simplicity, is a thousand times richer and stronger than all the artifices of the learning taught by pedants in the conservatories and musical academies."*

How well, truly and powerfully said! How aptly he expressed the fundamental principle that the development of music must take place on the basis of inter-action, of enrichment of "learned" music by folk music! This subject has almost entirely disappeared from our present theoretical and critical articles. This again confirms the danger of the isolation of our foremost modern composers from the people, in view of their rejection of such a wonderful source of art as the folk song and folk melody. Such a gulf must not exist in Soviet music.

Allow me to pass on to the question of the relation of national music to foreign music. The comrades have correctly noted here that there is a predilection for even a certain orientation on modern western bourgeois music, on decadent music, and that this, too, is one of the underlying features of the formalistic trend in Soviet music.

The relation of Russian music to the music of Western Europe was well defined by Stasov when he wrote, in his article, *Some Hindrances to the New Russian Art*, that: "It would be ridiculous to deny science or knowledge in any realm,

* A. N. Serov, *Critical Articles*, Vol. III, 1931.

music included, but only the new Russian musicians, who do not have behind them a historical background inherited from previous centuries, from a long chain of scholastic periods in Europe can look science bravely in the eye; they respect it, and enjoy the benefits it confers, but without overdoing it, without being obsequious about it. They deny the necessity of its dry and pedantic excesses, they deny its gymnastic diversions, to which thousands of people in Europe attach such importance, and do not believe that it is necessary to spend years on end doing nothing but humbly worshipping its sacred mysteries."*

That was how Stasov spoke of West European classical music. As for modern bourgeois music, which has reached a state of decline and degeneration, there is nothing to take from it. The more absurd and ridiculous then is the manifestation of subservience to modern bourgeois music, in its present state of decline.

If we examine the history of our Russian, and then Soviet music, the conclusion must be drawn that it developed and became a powerful force precisely because it succeeded in standing on its own feet and finding its own roads of development, thus making it possible to reveal the rich inner world of our people. Those who think that the flowering of national music, whether Russian or that of the other Soviet peoples comprising the Soviet Union, means minimizing the significance of internationalism in art are deeply mistaken. Internationalism in art arises not as a result of minimizing or impoverishing national art. On the contrary, internationalism arises from the very flowering of national art. To forget this truth is to lose sight of the guiding line, to lose one's own face, to become homeless cosmopolitans. Only that nation which has its own highly developed musical culture can appreciate the music of other peoples. One cannot be an internationalist in music, or in any other realm without being at the same time a genuine patriot of one's own country. If internationalism is founded on respect for other peoples, one cannot be an internationalist without respecting and loving one's own people.

* V. V. Stasov, *Selected Works*, Two-volume Edition, Vol. II, p. 233.

The whole experience of the U.S.S.R. confirms this. It follows then that internationalism in music, respect for the art of other peoples is developing in our country on the basis of the enrichment and development of national musical art, on the basis of such a flowering of this art that it has something to share with other peoples, and not on the basis of the impoverishment of national art, of blind imitation of foreign models and the erasing of the distinctive features of the national character in music. None of this should be forgotten when speaking of the relation of Soviet music to foreign music.

Further, in speaking of the departure of the formalistic trend from the principles of the classical heritage, we must not omit to mention the diminution of the role of *program music*. This has already been touched upon here, but the kernel of the problem has not been properly revealed. It is quite obvious that there is less program music, or almost none at all. Things have reached the pass where the content of the musical compositions that see the light of day have to be interpreted after their appearance. A new profession has come into being – that of interpreting musical works by critics who are friends of the composers, who try on the basis of personal intuition to decipher post factum the content of musical works that have already been made public and whose hazy idea, it is said, is not quite clear even to their authors. The neglect of program music is also a retreat from progressive traditions. As you know, Russian classical music was, as a rule, program music.

The question of novelty has also come up here. The point was made that its novelty was practically the principle distinguishing feature of the formalistic trend. But novelty is not an end in itself; the new must be better than the old, otherwise it is senseless. It seems to me that the followers of the formalistic school use this word chiefly to popularise bad music. One cannot call every attempt at originality, every distortion and trick in music an innovation. Unless one wishes merely to bandy words about, one must give oneself a clear account of what in the old should be abandoned, and what precisely new goal one should try to reach. Without that, the word novelty can mean only one thing and that is

revision of the foundations of music. It can only mean a breaking away from laws and standards of music which should not be abandoned. That these must not be abandoned does not imply conservatism, any more than that they are abandoned signifies novelty. Novelty is far from always coinciding with progress. Many young musicians are lead astray by this bugbear of novelty. They are told that unless they are original, new – they are the slaves of conservative traditions. But since novelty is not the equivalent of progress, spreading such ideas is tantamount to sowing abysmal confusion, if not to plain deceit.

Furthermore, the "novelty" of the formalists is by no means new, since this "novelty" smacks of the modern decadent bourgeois music of Europe and America. Here is where the real epigonists are to be found!

At one time, you remember, elementary and secondary schools went in for the "laboratory brigade" method and the "Dalton plan", which reduced the role of the teacher in the schools to a minimum and gave each pupil the right to set the theme of classwork at the beginning of each lesson. On arriving in the classroom, the teacher would ask the pupils "What shall we study today?" The pupils would reply: "Tell us about the Arctic," "Tell us about the Antarctic," "Tell us about Chapayev," "Tell us about Dneprostroi." The teacher had to follow the lead of these demands. This was called the "laboratory brigade method," but actually it amounted to turning the organisation of schooling completely topsy-turvy. The pupils became the directing force, and the teacher followed their lead. Once we had "loose-leaf textbooks", and the five point system of marks was abandoned. All these things were novelties, but I ask you, did these novelties stand for progress?

The Party cancelled all these "novelties," as you know. Why? Because these "novelties," in form very "leftish," were in actual fact extremely reactionary and made for the nullification of the school.

Or take this example. An Academy of Fine Arts was organised not so long ago. Painting is your sister, one of the muses. At one time, as you know, bourgeois influences were very strong in painting. They cropped up time and again

under the most "leftist" flags, giving themselves such tags as futurism, cubism, modernism; "stagnant academism" was "overthrown," and novelty proclaimed. This novelty expressed itself in insane carryings on, as for instance, when a girl was depicted with one head on forty legs, with one eye turned towards us, and the other towards Arzamas.

How did all this end? In the complete crash of the "new trend." The Party fully restored the significance of the classical heritage of Repin, Briullov, Vereshchagin, Vasnetsov and Surikov. Did we do right in reinstating the treasures of classical painting, and routing the liquidators of painting?

Would not the continued existence of the like "schools" have meant the nullification of painting? Did the Central Committee act "conservatively," was it under the influence of "traditionalism," of "epigonism" and so on, when it defended the classical heritage in painting? This is sheer nonsense!

The same applies to music. We do not affirm that the classical heritage is the absolute acme of musical culture. To say so would mean admitting that progress ended with the classics. But the classical models do remain unexcelled to this day. This means that we must learn and learn, that we must take from the classical musical heritage all that is best, in it, all that is essential to the further development of Soviet music.

There is much empty talk about epigonism and the like; these words are used to intimidate the youth and keep it from learning from the classics. The slogan is thrown out that the classics must be outstripped. That would be fine, of course. But to outstrip the classics they must first be overtaken, while you rule out the stage of "overtaking" as if you had already passed through it. But to speak frankly and express the thoughts that are in the minds of the Soviet spectator and listener, it would not be so bad if we had more works now that resembled the classics in content and form, in grace, in beauty and musicality. If that is "epigonism," why, there's no disgrace, perhaps, in being that kind of an epigonist!

With regard to naturalistic distortions. It was made clear here that the natural, healthy standards of music have been

increasingly discarded. Elements of crude naturalism are being used more and more in our music. Here is what Serov wrote ninety years ago, in warning against preoccupation with crude naturalism:

"In nature there is a sea of sound of the most divers kind and quality, but all these sounds, known as noise, thunder, roaring, splitting, splashing, rumbling, droning, pealing, howling, creaking, whistling, murmuring, whispering, rustling, hissing, rippling, and so on, and others not denoted in speech ... all these sounds either do not form the material of the musical tongue; or, if they are incorporated in it at all, it is only as exceptions (the ringing of bells, copper cymbals, musical triangles – the sound of drums, timbrels, etc.). The proper material of music is sound of a special quality...."*

Is it not true, is it not correct that the sound of cymbals and drums should be the exception in musical composition and not the rule?! Is it not clear that not even natural sound ought to be incorporated in musical compositions?! And yet how much inexcusable indulgence in vulgar naturalism unquestionably betokening retrogression, we find among us!

It must be frankly stated that quite a few works by modern composers are so saturated with naturalistic sounds that they make one think of a drilling machine if you will pardon the unaesthetic comparison, or of a musical murder van. You have got to realise that they are simply impossible to listen to!

With this music we begin to pass beyond the confines of the rational, beyond the confines not only of normal human emotions but also of normal human reason. True there are fashionable theories nowadays which assert that the pathological state of man is something of a higher state, and that the schizophrenic and the paranoid can in their hallucinations reach spiritual heights, such as the ordinary man can never reach in the normal state. These "theories" are not accidental, of course. They are very characteristic of the epoch of decay and decomposition of bourgeois culture. But let us leave all these "refinements" to the insane. Let us demand that our composers give us normal, human music.

* N. Serov, *Critical Articles*, Vol. I, p. 504

What has been the result of this forgetting of the laws and canons on which musical creation is based? Music has wreaked its own vengeance on those who have tried to distort its nature. When music ceases to have content, to be highly artistic, when it becomes ungraceful, ugly, vulgar, it ceases to satisfy the needs for the gratification of which it exists, it ceases to be itself.

Perhaps you are surprised that the Central Committee of the Bolshevik Party is demanding that music be beautiful and graceful? What is this new idea?! No, this was no slip of the tongue. We declare that we stand for beautiful, graceful music, for music capable of satisfying the aesthetic demands and artistic tastes of the Soviet people. These demands and tastes have grown and developed immeasurably. The people appraise the value of a musical composition by how deeply it reflects the spirit of our day, the spirit of our people, by how comprehensible it is to the wide masses. What is genius in music? By no means that which can be understood only by some one person or by a small group of aesthetic gourmands. A musical composition is all the more a work of genius, the deeper and profounder its content, the greater mastery it displays, the more people it reaches, the more people it is capable of inspiring. Not everything that is comprehensible is a work of genius, but every genuine work of genius is comprehensible, and it is all the more a work of genius, the more comprehensible it is to the wide masses of people.

A. N. Serov was absolutely right when he said: "Time is powerless against the truly beautiful in art – otherwise we would not still admire Homer, Dante and Shakespeare, or Raphael, Titian and Poussain, or Palestrina, Handel and Gluck.*"

The more chords of the human soul it moves to response, the greater a musical composition is. From the standpoint of musical perception, man is such a wonderful and rich membrane or radio receiver, functioning on thousands of waves – no doubt one could find a better comparison – that for him the sounding of a single note, a single chord, a single emotion is insufficient.

* N. Serov, *Critical Articles*, Vol. II, p. 1036.

If the composer can arouse the response of only one or several human chords, it is not enough, for modern man, especially our Soviet man, is a very complex perceptive being. Even Glinka, Chaikovsky and Serov wrote of the highly developed musical feeling of the Russian people, but at the time when they wrote of this the Russian people had not yet acquired an extensive knowledge of classical music. During the years of Soviet government the musical culture of the people has risen tremendously. If our people were distinguished by great musical feeling even in the old days, today their artistic taste has been enriched as a result of the popularisation of classical music. If you have allowed music to be impoverished, if, as was the case in Muradeli's opera, the potentialities of the orchestra and abilities of the singers are not utilised, you have ceased to gratify the musical demands of your listeners. Sow the wind, and reap the tempest. Let the composers whose work has proven incomprehensible to the people not reckon on the people "growing up" to this music which they cannot understand. The people have no need for music which they cannot understand. Composers have themselves and not the people to blame. They must critically re-evaluate their work and come to see why it has not met with the requirements of the people, why it has not won the approval of the people, and what must be done that the people might understand and approve their compositions.

This is the line along which they must redirect their work, is it not?

Voices from floor: Right!

Zhdanov: I shall now pass on to the question of the danger of loss of professional mastery. If formalistic distortions make music poorer, they also entail the danger of loss of professional mastery. In this connection it would be well to consider still another widespread misconception: the claim that classical music is supposedly simpler, and the latest music more complex, and that complication of the technique of modern music represents a forward step, since development always means progression from the simple to the complex, from the particular to the general. It is not true that every instance of complication is a sign of increased

mastery. Not every. Whoever believes every complication to be progress is grossly mistaken. Here is an example. Many foreign words are used, as you know, in the Russian literary tongue. You also know how Lenin ridiculed the abuse of the habit of using foreign words, and how he urged that our native tongue be cleansed of this foreign litter. The complication of the language through the introduction of a foreign word in place of a Russian word, when there is a perfectly good Russian word at hand, was never considered a sign of linguistic progress. The foreign word "lozung" (slogan) for instance, has been replaced now by the Russian word "prizyv," and is this not an improvement?! The same is true of music. Under the camouflage of superficial complication of compositional methods, lies a tendency to impoverish music. Musical language is becoming inexpressive. So much that is crude, vulgar and false is being incorporated in music, that it is ceasing to perform its intrinsic function – that of affording pleasure. Is the aesthetic role of music to be eliminated? Is that the aim of innovation? Or is music to become a soliloquy on the part of the composer? If that is so, then why force it on the people? This music is becoming anti-popular and rampantly individualistic, and the people do indeed have the right to feel indifferent to its fate, and they are beginning to. If the listener is expected to praise music that is crude, ungraceful, vulgar, based on atonality, on dissonance from beginning to end, music in which consonance is made the exception, and false notes and their combination the rule – this represents a direct retreat from the basic musical canons. All these things combined threaten to wipe out music entirely, just as cubism and futurism in painting represent nothing more nor less than the aim to nullify painting. Music that deliberately ignores the normal human emotions, and shocks the mind and nervous system of man, cannot be popular, cannot be useful to society.

Mention was made here of the one-sided interest in instrumental symphony music without texts. It is wrong to consign the varied genres of music to oblivion. What this leads to can be seen in Muradeli's opera. You remember how kind and generous the great masters of art were with regard

to variety of genres? They understood that the people demand a variety of genres. Why are you so unlike your great predecessors? You are much harsher than those, who, though they had reached the summits of art, wrote solo and choral songs and orchestral music for the people.

And now, with regard to the loss of melody in music. Modern music is characterised by a one-sided interest in rhythm to the detriment of melody. But we know that music is enjoyable only when all its elements – melody and rhythm – are present in definite harmonic combinations. The one-sided interest in one element of music at the expense of another results in a violation of the correct interrelation of the various elements and cannot, naturally, be agreeable to the normal ear.

Distortions are also permitted in the use of instruments in other ways than they were intended to be used, as when the piano, for instance, is converted into a percussion instrument. The role of vocal music is minimised for the benefit of the one-sided development of instrumental music. And vocal music itself conforms less and less to the canons of vocal art. The critical comments of the vocalists expressed here by Comrades Derzhinskaya and Katulskaya, must be given full consideration.

All these and other digressions from the canons of musical art are a violation not only of the foundations of the normal functioning of musical sound, but also of the foundations of the physiology of normal hearing. Unfortunately, that realm of theory which deals with the physiological effect of music on the human organism has not been sufficiently elaborated by us. Nevertheless, we must take into account the fact that bad, disharmonic music unquestionably affects the correct psycho-physiological functioning of man.

The conclusions. The role of the classical heritage must be fully restored, normal human music must be fully restored. The danger that the formalistic trend harbors to the future of music must be stressed. This trend must be censured as a Herostratus-like attempt to destroy the temple of art built by the great masters of musical culture. All our composers must change their position and turn their face to

their people. They must realise that our Party, which expresses the interests of our state and our people, will support only a healthy and progressive trend in music, the trend of Soviet socialist realism.

Comrades! If you cherish the lofty title of the Soviet composer you must prove that you are capable of serving your people better than you have been serving them up to the present day. A serious examination awaits you. The formalistic trend in music was censured by the Party as many as twelve years ago. Since then the government has given many of you, including those who erred along formalistic lines, Stalin Prizes. The fact that this honor was shown you was a great sign of trust. We did not believe in doing so, that your work was free of shortcomings, but we were patient, expecting our composers themselves to find the strength to choose the proper road. But it is now clear to all that the intervention of the Party has become imperative. The Central Committee is now telling you plainly that if you continue on the creative road you have chosen, our music will never be a credit to us.

Two extremely important tasks now face of Soviet composers. The chief task is to develop and perfect Soviet music. The second is the task of protecting Soviet music against the infiltration of elements of bourgeois decadence. Let us not forget that the U.S.S.R. is now the guardian of universal musical culture, just as in all other respects it is the mainstay of human civilisation and culture against bourgeois decadence and decomposition of culture. Let us remember that alien bourgeois influences from abroad will strike a response in the minds of certain representatives of the Soviet intelligentsia who still harbour survivals of capitalism, which express themselves in the thoughtless and outlandish desire to exchange the treasures of Soviet musical culture for the sorry rags of modern bourgeois art. Therefore, not only the musical, but also the political ear of Soviet composers must be very keen. Your contact with the people must be closer than ever before. Your musical "ear for criticism" must be highly developed. You must follow the processes taking place in western art. But your task is not only to prevent the infiltration of bourgeois influences into

Soviet music. Your task is to prove the superiority of Soviet music, to create great Soviet music which will embody all that is best in the past development of music, which will reflect the present day of Soviet society, which will be capable of raising the culture of our people and their Communist awareness still higher.

We Bolsheviki do not reject the cultural heritage. On the contrary, we are critically assimilating the cultural heritage of all nations and all times in order to choose from it all that can inspire the working people of Soviet society to great exploits in labour, science and culture. We must help the people in this. If you do not set yourself this task, if you do not throw yourself heart and soul into its realisation, devoting to it all your ardour and creative enthusiasm, you will not be performing your historic role.

Comrades, we want, we ardently want to have our own *Big Five*, and for it to be more numerous and stronger than that group which once amazed the world by its talent, and covered our nation with glory. In order to be strong, you must cast aside everything that can weaken you, and choose only those weapons which can help you to become strong and mighty. If you draw upon the inspired classical musical heritage to the full, and at the same time develop it in the spirit of the new requirements of our great age, you will become a Soviet *Big Five*. We want you to overcome the retardation that has beset you as quickly as possible, to change your position as quickly as possible, and develop into a glorious cohort of Soviet composers who will be the pride of the entire Soviet people.