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Georgian Musical Criticism of the Soviet and Post-Soviet Eras

Gruzinių muzikos kritika sovietmečiu ir posovietiniu laikotarpiu

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Abstract

This article examines the problem of music criticism in Georgia during the Soviet and post-Soviet eras. Criticism and music criticism, in particular, as an “art of discussion and analysis” became “destructive” and dangerous for totalitarian regimes. Authentic criticism was replaced by “quasi-criticism,” which was driven by the do’s and don’ts of the regime. Thus, the following issues are discussed in the article: how development of music criticism reflected the social-political changes in Georgia after occupation (since 1921) and to what extent musical processes have been influenced there. Consequently, attention is drawn to the decades from the 1920s to the 1950s and from the 1960s to the 1980s, and the situation is analyzed through the lens of Soviet aesthetics. In that regard, Grigory Orjonikidze’s works are identified as the most influential and mind-opening examples in the development of Georgian music criticism under Soviet rule.

The reconsideration of music criticism became topical at the end of the last century (the late ‘90s, after the Soviet Union collapsed). In the postmodern reality, musical criticism had to rediscover its role, redesign its values, and regain its place through the perspective of both local and global realities. The following issues are discussed: the influence of the mass media; social media’s effects on the development of music criticism; and coexistence of “description-” as well as the “analysis-” based attitude towards the musical processes.

Keywords: Georgian music criticism, “quasi criticism”, soviet and post-soviet aesthetics, products and information process, Grigory Orjonikidze.

Anotacija

Straipsnyje nagrinėjama muzikos kritikos sovietinėje ir posovietinėje Gruzijoje problema. Kritika, ir ypač muzikos, kaip „diskusijos ir analizės menas“, totalitariniams režimams tampa „destruktyvi“ ir pavojinga; tikrą kritiką pakeitė „pusiau kritika“, paremta režimo nustatytais leidimais ir draudimais. Taigi straipsnyje analizuojama, kaip muzikos kritikos raidoje atsispindėjo socialiniai-politiniai pokyčiai po Gruzijos okupacijos (nuo 1921 m.) ir kokių mastu tai veikė muzikos procesus. Sovietinės estetikos aspektu nagrinėjami praeito šimtmečio trečias–šeštas ir septyntas–devintas dešimtmečiai. Šiame kontekste išskiriami Grigorijaus Ordžonikidzės darbai kaip įtakingiausi ir geriausiai pristatantys Gruzijos muzikos kritikos raidą sovietų valdymo laikais.

Praeito šimtmečio pabaigoje (baigiantis dešimtam dešimtmečiui, griuvus Sovietų Sąjungai) tapo aktualu iš naujo įvertinti muzikos kritiką. Postmodernioje tikrovėje muzikos kritikai teko iš naujo atrasti savo vaidmenį, naujai apibrėžti vertybes ir išsikvototi naują vietą, atsižvelgiant į vietines ir globalias aktualijas. Straipsnyje keliami tokie klausimai kaip žiniasklaidos ir socialinių medijų įtaka muzikos kritikos raidai bei į aprašymą ir į analizę orientuotų muzikos procesų traktavimo formų koegzistavimas.

Reikšminiai žodžiai: Gruzijos muzikos kritika, kvazikritika, sovietinė ir posovietinė estetika, informaciniai procesai, Grigorijus Ordžonikidzė.

Introduction

Problems concerning music criticism have been discussed openly and conversation about them became essential in Georgia after the Soviet Union’s collapse. Consequently, issues about music criticism and its value have become topical. The school of Georgian music criticism was established at the beginning of the last century and has reflected the turbulence of the country’s entire history from first independence to the Russian annexation of 1921, to 1992, when independence was regained. It’s not possible to cover the full history of music criticism development in Georgia in the framework of a single article. However, the main turning points will be highlighted from the perspective of Georgian history.

This article will deliver a short overview of music criticism in Georgia during the Soviet and post-Soviet eras: before

Stalin’s death (1921–1953), after Stalin’s death (60–80), and the post-Soviet era. It does not only describe the effects from Stalin’s regime or the Thaw period but explains music critics’ behavior under Soviet and post-Soviet rule as well. On the one hand, Georgian music criticism history coincides with the problem of ideological/post-ideological issues, but on the other hand, it can also be placed among problems concerning individuals’ ability to judge and decide independently. The line between ideology and the ability to judge independently emerged as a terrifying dilemma at the beginning of the last century; a person should have been “chosen” the “on the right side,” while in the post-Soviet era the idea of no control and “full freedom” was cultivated. Nevertheless, this does not mean that all problems inherited from the Soviet era disappeared suddenly following the events of the ‘90s. Georgia continues to deal with the results of 70 years of totalitarianism.

Music criticism – its role and function in the police and post-police states

For the purpose of outlining the general definition of music criticism, I refer to Bojan Bujic in the *Oxford Companion to Music*, where he treats music criticism as a product of the intellectual activity of judgments on value and the degree of excellence of individual works of music or whole groups or genres (Bujic 2013). In that regard, the ability to judge and decide independently is crucial. Could it be reduced only to the idea of expressing value judgments? Paul Honigsheim argues that music criticism as a part of the bigger information process is a cultural model, an axiology of the contemporary culture, where various aspects and forms and layers—such as mass culture, art, journalism, or musicology—integrate:

Art is considered to have a sphere of maximum impact, which is defined by sociohistorical parameters; moreover, the meaning of specific forms of artistic expression is characterized by their universal invalidity, rather than by universal validity. (Honigsheim 1973: 38)

The importance of music criticism as a product and as a part of the information process was well understood by the fathers of Soviet ideology. They introduced the rules about how music should be perceived by the “new working class.” At the same time, Soviet ideologists understood that music criticism creates an information space that might be used as a powerful tool in managing creative processes, where the appraisal factor is the key element.

Is that the only reason why music criticism was so important to the authorities of the totalitarian regime? And what are the main duties of music critics who live in a police state?

The role and function of art criticism was to create information that would have played a crucial role in art as well as create a public with the “right” information and values. The music critic as a product maker was “in charge” of doing so.

The music critic also has only emerged recently and in relatively complex cultures. He is hindered in individual expression even more than the musicologist. Police states do not permit independent judgment. However, even where the press is free of state censorship, other powers such as church, political parties, and economically powerful groups restrict freedom of the press impeding the development of independent music criticism. (Honigsheim 1973: 112)

Honigsheim’s statement regarding independent judgment is quite in order due to the fact that the line between ideology and the ability to judge independently had emerged as a terrifying dilemma at the beginning of the last century. The music critic should have offered ways to achieve the new social reality through “musical propaganda.”

What is the spirit of music propaganda? I would once again quote Honigsheim here:

Positive music criticism was to turn into a branch of political propaganda, a part of the overall indoctrination program aimed at imposing the Nazi vision on the total life experience of all Germans... This illustrates how changes in political structure can bring about major changes in performance practice, musical involvement [...] Another series of examples can be offered from the case of the Soviet Union, which was similar in some aspects and will be quite different in others [...] Positive criticism was to offer suggestions by the critic on how the performance of a work would better help in building a new German music full of national feeling. (Honigsheim 1973: 207)

If we replace the words ‘Nazi’ and ‘Germans’ from Honigsheim’s quote in the following sentence, we won’t find any difference between the policies towards the music criticism of the two police states of the twentieth century; furthermore, it will sound identical to the ideas of the socialist realism:

‘Soviet’ vision on the total life experience of all ‘Soviet’ people [...] Positive criticism was to offer suggestions by the critic on how the performance of a work would better help in building a new Soviet music full of ‘Soviet’ feeling.

Nevertheless, there were different stages of implementation of the ideology (Stalin’s period, the Thaw era, stagnation, *glasnost*) in real Soviet life, but the cornerstone has remained unchanged. Music criticism as a product and as information helping to build right audience, aided in creating the new Soviet music full of Soviet feeling; that’s what music criticism was for.

But what about the value of the “product”? How did Soviet ideologists define the value of a certain piece? These questions ought to be answered through the lens of social realism. I can’t agree more with the statement that:

...political rather than aesthetic factors were most decisive in the evaluation, and commentary on literature is advanced succinctly in the introduction: Due to the particular status of literature, literary criticism became a platform for the formation of public discourse in Russia and a sphere (often the only one) of political activity. (Dobrenko, Tihanov 2011: 406)

Although these authors explicitly describe the problems of the literature, it reflects the challenges of music criticism as well.

All criticism, not only musical criticism, had become politically driven and linked to the painful process of implementation of the “right” rules in life. What were they? Simply stated, they revolved around propaganda for socialist concepts and anti-individualism, aiming at unifying artists and audiences around common proletariat ideas. Furthermore, these rules emphasized separation from Western musical developments, adherence to Party ideology, and

most importantly serving and contributing to the building of the socialist society. What did they criticize? Everything that contradicted the above mentioned. It's worth recalling that socialist realism aimed to form perception and appropriate language that would have been mono-stylistic (definition of Lotman).

If the common ideas of the development of the newly born society were not reflected by the artwork or did not exclude the antithetical elements while representing the complex ideas without any possibility of self-identification, that was more than enough to become a subject of criticism. George Orwell said it best:

The peculiarity of totalitarian state is that it controls the thought, it doesn't fix it. It sets up unquestionable dogmas, and it alters them day to day. It needs dogmas, because it needs absolute obedience from its subjects, but it can't avoid the changes which are dictated by power politics. It declares itself infallible and at the same time it attacks the very concept of objective truth. (Orwell 2018: 64)

How did the situation change after the fall of the Soviet Union? A strict attitude towards music criticism, censorship, and control was replaced by the idea of "full freedom." A "no control" approach was cultivated. From *glasnost* up to the fall of the Soviet Union, the main value of intellectual freedom was declared in the capital of the Soviet Union and its satellite countries. Having no ideological frames had become a "new reality" and "tradition"; Post-Soviet countries were thrown into the river of cultural theories without experiencing being part of the vivid cultural processes taking place in the West. What's more, it can be asserted that values were equally important for both the Soviets as well as those living in post-Soviet times.

However, this did not mean that all problems inherited from the Soviet past had disappeared. Moreover, after the fall of the Soviet Union, the former Soviet countries still faced the consequences of 70 years of the regime, and unfortunately the Georgian Soviet Socialist Republic—as one of the Soviet republics—was no exception.

Music criticism before Stalin's death (1921–1953)

The first phase (1920–1930s)

The Georgian professional composition school was established at the beginning of the twentieth century by the time of occupation (1921) and significant works—including those of classical opera, which was established during that time—by Zacharia Paliashvili, Dimitri Arakishvili, Viktor Dolidze, and Niko Sulkanishvili were written before occupation, during the country's short independence.

In this section we examine the period from 1921 until Stalin's death in 1953. This timeframe can be broken down into two phases:

- 1920–1930s: Introduction of the Soviet regime followed by the adaptation to the requirements of a new set of rules
- 1936–1953: The Red Terror and Stalin's purges in the 1930s, the selection of dissidents and their executions, using criticism (including music criticism) as a symbol of state violence.

Certain rules for "musical behavior" were introduced during the first phase of occupation of the country, at the very time the Georgian composers of the first generation faced a transitional period and the necessity to adapt to a new reality.

The adaptation went "successfully," and as a result Georgian music was "enriched" by the "musical chronicles of Soviet life." Alongside great pieces, in only a few years Georgian composers of the classical era wrote so-called "Fact Works," such as *Glory to Zebes* by Meliton Balanchivadze, *Solemn Cantata* on the 10th anniversary of the October Revolution, for solo voices, chorus, and orchestra (1927) by Zacharia Paliashvili, followed by number of hymns dedicated to the Party by various composers of that time, such as Aleksandre (Alexi) Machavariani's oratorio *My Homeland* (1954), Otar Taktaishvili's cantata *Hymn to the party* (1952), and Revaz Laghidze's *Glory to the Party*. As an evident example of the "successful adaptation" the collective cantata dedicated to the "Great Stalin" should be named. This piece was written by five Georgian composers on the basis of a text taken from a workers' report to Stalin. The number of parts (in total five) were also defined by the number of composers: the first part was written by Grigol Kiladze, the second part by Andria Balanchivadze, the third part by Vano Gokieli, the fourth part by Shalva Mshvelidze, and the last part was written by Iona Tuskia.

It's difficult to find a critical reflection on Soviet pieces by Georgian music classicists. Furthermore, we don't even get a hint about the new Soviet cliché. I think the grounds for such "behaviorism" was given in a resolution released in 1925.

We should hold communism tight, never give up proletariat ideology, and disclose the objective, class-specific concept of the literature. The critics should fight grimly against the counterrevolutionary manifestations in the literature. (Resolution 1925)

Now it's clear why critics avoided open and independent judgment about the developments. Instead of making vital and critical notes, critics focused on the concert announcements, description of the program, performing technique and style of a musician. But no critical word was said about the quality and value of the certain musical pieces. Such behavior was common for all fields of art. In that regard the following publishing possibilities might be found in the main musical magazines, art journals and newspapers

s of the Soviet Union, such as *Izvestia*, *Krasnaia Zvezda*, and *Soviet Art*.

Did Georgian music experience a lack of critics in this field? Among the first generation of Georgian music critics of the Stalin era are Lado Donadze (a music history professor and the founder of the music history chair at the V. Sarajishvili Tbilisi State Conservatoire as well as music critic), Pavle Khuchua (a professor at the V. Sarajishvili Tbilisi State Conservatoire, musicologist, and professor). Both were proactive in the music criticism scene, in a majority of the cases the role of music critics was substituted by the censors of the Central Committee. The total control imposed in art forced music critics in Georgia to give space to censors and hide critical reflection behind musical historiography. As soon as the music history and theory chairs were established at the Tbilisi State Conservatoire¹ music historiography started to make close ties with music criticism and tried to hide critical reflection behind the historical approach; this process was defined by the policy of the regime and was therefore inevitable. For instance, Pavle Khuchua focused his attention on publishing two monographs about Georgian composers: Andria Karashvili (1948) and Meliton Balanchivadze (1950). The same applies to Lado Donadze, who published musicological research about Shalva Mshvelidze (1946). If we were to look at those years it would be hard to find critical reflections contradicting the official ideology in culture. In regards to that, Gorki's opinions are worth noting. He encouraged Stalin to ban the literature-creative organizations and follow up with the introduction of socialist realism, which was announced by the Communist Party as the only official "creative method" for Soviet artists starting in 1932. Gorki wrote: "For our writers, scrutinizing the dirty crimes of capitalism is of critical importance. Writers should comprehensively understand the history of the past as well as present days; the writer must act as a midwife and a grave digger at once" (History of Russian literature 2014: 97).

The process of substantial transformation affected all fields of art, but strong emphasis was placed on music. On Gorki's initiative, the following supplementary clause was introduced:

Revolutionary songs must be performed, especially in those regions where they are unfairly and unpardonably forgotten. Soviet composers must swiftly start working on mass songs as well as military marches. (Quoted by Gvakharia in his radiocast on "Radio Tavisufleba [Radio Freedom] from 2002)

In this quote, it's clear that Gorki strived to combine socialist content with the so-called "national form" that would be an ideal musical work created for the people and glorify the regime at the same time.

Thus, the drastic process of Stalin's taking over the arts started in the early 1930s. It did not take long for the

dictator to impose an aesthetic doctrine after Gorki's speech. On April 23, 1932, the ideology of socialist realism was declared. The main value of the music of socialist realism was its difference from the "formalistic," hermetic music of the Western elite. They (the West) were looking for atonality and a serial technique; they sought to break the traditional understanding of musical language. Contrary to them (the West), socialist realism wanted to maintain tonality and create music full of melodies that was able to speak to the masses. Anything else and that which might have been associated with "abstract, formalistic art" was rejected. To paint a clearer picture, I refer to Herta Muller²:

...it's important to introduce a semi-true reality, to create ideological folklore with its mass songs, glorifying the Communist Party, to ban even a hint of authenticity. How can that be achieved? Erasing certain important issues such as religion and eliminating 'incorrect' symbols helps language to become a powerful tool; that's enough to invade and occupy minds through language. (Bradatan 2014)

This is the mythology of great existence, full of invented symbols revealed through everyday life and celebrations. Awards ceremonies as well as prize distributions needed to be accompanied by the relevant music.

The Soviet propaganda machine started to group composers according to the followers and rule breakers of socialist realism. Music criticism was about to show its adherence to Soviet dogma, willing and able to behave accordingly; thus musicians and music critics were divided into "not sufficient" and "sufficient." The obligation of critics was to judge artworks according and in reference to socialist realism rules; they were identifying the *elite within the elite*, and thus the permanent and painful process of the selection of the "right" artworks began. The cost of selection was even life. Music criticism had become wax in the hands of the ideological fathers. Saying that government's resolution was a just verdict is saying nothing. Everything was prepared for the total control of creative minds: in 1932 the Georgian Composers Union was established with relevant subsections for musicologists. That was a great rehearsal for the witch hunt, a preparatory phase for Stalin's purges.

The second phase (1936–1953)

During the second phase, Stalin took over the arts. The process went through the several stages:

- 1) in 1937 the "terror of censorship" drastically entered into force in Georgia and lasted until the end of 1940s; and
- 2) in 1946 a cultural doctrine was developed by Andrei Zhdanov, the right hand of Stalin.

According to this doctrine, the world was divided into two camps: the "imperialistic" (Western block) headed by the United States and "democratic," and that area of the world under the leadership of the Soviet Union. It had its

own “reality” with rules, status, ideology, an aesthetic basics, a cultural space and a cultural center. The entire cultural policy was centered around the official status of the culture – Social Realism, which in return had its own integrated space called the Soviet Union (which included 15 republics, with the socialistic countries of the Eastern Europe not officially a part of the union) and one center, Moscow, the capital. The Ministry of Culture as a state patron and supporter of culture and art was looking to spread and disseminate the Soviet identity through culture in the masses. The same rules applied for Soviet composers and Soviet music critics from all the republics.

What was inadmissible in the Soviet Union? The cultural policy of the Soviet Union determined the actual role of music in the real life of the Soviet Georgia and its essence: a bipolar, black-and-white world that was introduced after the WW2 revealed not only the confrontation and opposition between the Western and Eastern political blocks, but the dichotomy of modernism and socialist realism as well. It's well known that socialist realism showed a preference for traditional forms and approaches in terms of harmony, musical language, and style. It was ardently against Western modernism and the avant-garde. In the case of “not sufficient” art, the music critics' negative verdict was as follows: formalism in music. The labels given to the artwork meant that the artist failed to comply with the official Soviet cultural policy and was at risk for persecution. These definitions were given to many Georgian composers of the Soviet 1930s and 1940s, such as Vano Muradeli³ (and his opera *The Great Friendship*⁴), Andria Balanchivadze's Symphony No. 1, Shalva Mshvelidze, and Lado Donadze, the famous Georgian musicologist and musical critic. They all remained alive but faced great problems and thereafter never resisted the authorities.

Let's expand more on Muradeli's opera case: The idea about the opera was born in 1921 when Muradeli met Sergo Orjonikidze⁵ and decided to create an opera about Ordzhonikidze's fight against the white army. It took Muradeli nearly 20 years to fulfill the idea, and he staged the opera in the Bolshoi Theatre only in 1947. The initial name of the opera was *The special commissar*, but by the suggestion of the censorship authorities the title was changed in 1947 to *The Great Friendship*, (“Velikaia Druzhiba”) emphasizing the friendship between the many peoples of the Soviet Union (Vlasova, 2010:225). Joseph Stalin attended a performance at the Bolshoi on January 5, 1948, and strongly disapproved of the opera. Soon, a resolution “*The Great Friendship* (Velikaia Druzhiba) by Vano Muradeli” was released with the following statement:

Music criticism gave up voicing the opinion of Soviet society and evolved into the megaphone of certain composers. (Resolution 1948)

It should be noted that the role of critics was taken over by the censors of the Central Committee.

At a glance, the opera seemed to be in accordance with the Soviet rules, as Shostakovich commented:

Everything seems to have augured success for Muradeli. The plot had ideology, from the lives of the Georgians and Ossetians. [...] Ordzhonikidze was a character in the opera; he was cleaning up the Caucasus. The composer was also of Caucasian descent. What more could you ask? (Volkov 1995: 142–143)

While trying to understand what the reason was for Stalin's rage, Shostakovich elaborated more on that and came to the conclusion that a person might become the subject of punishment not only for modernistic musical language but for problems in the libretto as well:

Shostakovich goes on to itemize three aspects which in fact enraged Stalin. Stalin himself was of Ossetian descent and felt that in the opera the Ossetians were marginalized by the Georgians, [...]. Stalin also took offence at praise for Ordzhonikidze; although Ordzhonikidze was officially a Bolshevik hero, Stalin was reminded that he had driven his old friend to suicide. Finally Stalin was offended that, instead of using the traditional lezginka dance melody in the opera (a tune which was one of Stalin's favorites), Muradeli had composed his own lezginka tune” (Volkov 1995: 143).⁶

But In 1958, only after the death of Stalin, a new decree was announced, called “On the Correction of Errors in the Evaluation of *The Great Friendship*, *Bogdan Khmel'nitsky* and *From All My Heart*”; it was issued by the Central Committee according to which Muradeli's opera was rehabilitated (Wilson 1994: 292–293).

Another case for having judged the musical piece according to prejudices of the Socialist Realism policy was the Symphony No. 1 written by Andria Balanchivadze. The discussion took place at the recital hall of the Tbilisi State Conservatoire attended by musicians, composers, and members of the Georgian Central Committee of the Communist Party in 1948. Balanchivadze was accused of formalism and cosmopolitanism; after a long discussion, Andria Balanchivadze and Lado Donadze, a musicologist (who was the only one to support Balanchivadze) were given a small penalty. Donadze had said:

Although the presence of the stylistic errors, our friend Balanchivadze is a honest Soviet composer. (Toradze, 2010: 100; quoted by Kavtaradze 2010a)

It's not clear why the Soviet authorities changed their mind towards Balanchivadze. The official minutes of that day cannot be found either in Georgian national archives or in the archive of the Tbilisi State Conservatoire. There are no critical reviews, articles, or reflections written by music critics on Balanchivadze's symphony. The only information

we have from that day is the caricature by an anonymous painter and stories from the spectators. The discussion at the recital hall was kept secret the Communist Party and kept in the archives of the KGB. Unfortunately, the majority of those documents were lost during the brutal '90s. It might only be assumed that Balanchivadze was "saved" because of his brother – George Balanchivadze (the famous George Balanchine, the father of American ballet), who was already living in the US.

A short overview of music criticism "behaviorism" before Stalin's death might conclude the following:

1. Political rather than aesthetic factors were the most decisive ones in the processes defining the cultural policy of the Soviet Union. That's proved by the several Party decrees released in the 1930s and 1940s that made a crucial impact on the further development of art music and critics in the countries under Soviet rule
2. Music criticism has gone through all phases of implementing the Soviet legacy and therefore reflected its turning points—from gentler times up to the Red Terror.
3. Music criticism strived to reveal itself and found the following ways of existing in a world driven by the regime:
 - while building close ties to musical historiography, music criticism tried to conceal critical reflection under the historical approach; thus the role of real critics was substituted by the censors of the Central Committee;
 - music critics gave up independent judgment about the value of musical pieces, maintaining emphasis on the announcements of concerts, descriptions of concert programs, and evaluation of certain performers;
 - music critics became the voice of the ideology in the process of evaluating art pieces.

Music criticism after Stalin. Thaw and Stagnation times

The Red Terror came to the end with the death of Stalin. After that period, Soviet politics went through three main stages: the Thaw period, the time of stagnation, and *glasnost*. A general description of art's position during that time might be the following: the main idea of the Soviet legacy was kept unchanged—culture remained politically driven, while the tendency to reject foreign music continued to flourish.

The reconsideration of Stalin's legacy was infused into all spheres of Soviet life. The slogan "We need critics," which was created as a way to announce a verdict on recent history, was followed by public speeches for a "truth" and "real critical" word. Criticizing the past for not having critics was in the spirit of the anti-Stalin campaign. But does that mean that inner values changed? How did criticism benefit from the Thaw? And did it really enjoy the freedom of creativity?

The Thaw was remarkable in Georgian music criticism history for several reasons: the Thaw created a very interesting sense of the global context for the cultures beyond the Iron Curtain. The idea about the competition with the rest of the world played a crucial role in both music making as well as music criticism. Musicologists and critics got the chance to reflect on the context in its broadening meaning. Cultural and political considerations played a crucial role in the development of Georgian music since its foundation, which was reflected in music criticism, and the degree of the intersection between politics and culture defined the extent of freedom in the field of music criticism.

The 1960s was a turning point for Georgian music history. This was a time when composers like Sulkhan Nasidze, Otar Taktakishvili, Sulkhan Tsintsadze, Nodar Gabunia, Bidzina Kvernadze, and Giya Kancheli arrived on the scene. Simultaneously, Givi Orjonikidze, the open-minded musicologist and an influential music critic of that time, entered the field of music criticism. He swiftly became a leader in the Georgian music criticism school of the '60s. Orjonikidze criticized the Georgian musicological and music critical school harshly in his work *Contemporary Georgian Music through the light of aesthetics and sociology* (Orjonikidze 1985). Undoubtedly, the work gives essential information about the circumstances and the conditions of Georgian music criticism to the '80s. It also gives hints about the hard-pressed situation that Georgian music criticism inherited from the past. But Orjonikidze did not seem to feel sympathetic towards it. In spite of the severe historical circumstances, he calls on musicologists to become more flexible towards the new life standards and be more adaptive to the situations that they might have faced:

...modern reality requires musicologists to overcome the inertness of being part of a certain guild; [...] in order to become healthier, we have to take care of the process of critics' revitalization. (Orjonikidze 1985: 228, 243)

What are the main aspects that Orjonikidze highlighted? First, in his work *Contemporary Georgian Music through the light of aesthetics and sociology* (Orjonikidze 1985) he called out music critics for not having a critical approach to the art music inheritance of the recent days. Orjonikidze continued by blaming Georgian music criticism in not being able to speak the truth towards living composers: Although the judgment had well-grounded justification, the critics maintained their silence about the reason for such an approach; he went further and explored the idea about reconsideration of already existing values. It seemed hard for him to accept the fact that critics did not see the damage that was done by their silence towards cultural processes. Judging to what extent Orjonikidze was allowed to speak about these issues seems to be a difficult task.

In addition to the issues mentioned above, Orjonikidze highlighted the problems of music perception and the role of critics in this process. In his opinion, there were only two main “players”—the composer and the performer—and he regretted to say that, due to recent history, musicologists and critics held a secondary position and the Georgian music criticism scene lacked outspoken critics (Orjonikidze 1985). He described the situation in an explicit way, and it’s hard to argue with the author. In an epoch of developed TV and radio communication, Orjonikidze outlined the insufficiency of the work forces and the shortage of highly qualified professionals in the music criticism world. In that regard, Orjonikidze saw an urgent need for musicologists with a creative approach to artworks; only in that case, he admitted, the voice of critics might be heard

I think that our musical culture as well as the composer himself lost a lot when Taktakishvili’s opera *Mindia* was not discussed in due season. I have offered a few critical reflections in regards to that, and my colleagues (and not only they) attacked me—how I dared to say a critical word towards a piece with great success and international recognition. I agree that Taktakishvili’s *Mindia* has been one of the most successful operas in the Georgian opera history so far. I don’t doubt it myself; but I cannot ignore the fact about the several disorders in the libretto. [...] I have just mentioned them. [...] I think, if we still keep glorifying the quality of certain pieces it will not be possible to describe the real situation in the arts. (Orjonikidze 1985: 251–252)

Orjonikidze’s landmark book is a chronicle of the problems caused by the regime and yet, going through his work I can say that he was critical to the outcomes of the Stalinist era but at the same time, Orjonikidze was not critically reflecting and analyzing the main reasons. But maybe it’s because, in reality, the Thaw and the following period of stagnation was based on the same values, and the instinct to survive (so familiar to those living and working in the 1930s and 1940s) still had a strong ground. He certainly knew about the article published in 1958 in the iconic Soviet newspaper *Pravda* (*Truth*):

Some astray or unfair critics started to review the principles of Marxism and Leninism in regards to the commitment to the people in art. They demanded “corrections” towards twentieth-century modernistic trends. They tried to misinterpret the essential difference between the socialist art (with its progressive ideas) and the old bourgeois art. Musical society gave a push back to these provisional attempts. (*Pravda* 1958)

The fact that “other music” moved to the underground is an evident example of the real value of Soviet ideology after Stalin’s death; nothing had changed. “Other music” (the name of music not created according to Soviet dogma, even after Stalin) was still a case for those Georgian composers (Svanidze, Shugliashvili) who had been neglected by the

fathers of ideology in the ‘70s. For a long time, they had been a part of the underground art world. Music critics, including Orjonikidze, had their lips sealed about them. It’s worth mentioning that in the work *Contemporary Georgian Music through the light of aesthetics and sociology*, published in 1985, Orjonikidze had not even mentioned ignorance of the music critics towards the neglected composers. In my opinion, this proves the unvarnished truth—the Soviets had had the ability and power to control the minds and the “space” given for “criticism” in art still had limits. As proof, I would refer to the resolution of the Central Committee of the Communist Party released in 1972:

Criticism is still under-active in implementing the ideas of the revolution, ideals of socialist realism in the arts, in scrutinizing the essence of bourgeois ‘mass culture’ and decadency tendencies, it is passive in fighting the non-Marxist aesthetical concepts. (Resolution 1972)

Glasnost

In fact, 1985 closed the stagnation epoch with the one of the last documents—“Let’s unite the proletariat of all countries”—released by the regional committee of the Youth Communist Party. The document comprised the names of the representatives of “other music” (from various music subcultures—rock, jazz, pop, etc.). On the one hand, the list contained the names of performers such as the Scorpions, Pink Floyd, the Sex Pistols, and Tina Turner, and on another hand, the possible moral damage was highlighted.

Stagnation was replaced by a time of openness and transparency called *glasnost* that lasted for five years (1986–1991). It was the first time when Soviet citizens were allowed to discuss problems publicly and seek solutions. Furthermore, the stream of fresh air blowing from the West reached the capital of the “evil empire” and its satellite republics.

What did the picture look like in the Georgian music of *glasnost*? Let’s take a look at the end of the last century. Two generations of Georgian composers were working simultaneously:

- 1) The so-called “fathers” (Nodar Mamisashvili, Giya Kancheli, Sulkhan Nasidze, Natela Svanidze, Nodar Gabunia, Bidzina Kvernadze), and
- 2) The generation of the ‘80s (Joseb Bardanashvili, Zura Nadreishvili, George Shaverzashvili, and others).

If we could describe the process, we might do so in the following way—“distancing” (from the Soviet rules) and “adapting”/synchronizing” with the European experience.

How did the process of distancing and synchronizing develop? Even during *glasnost*, historical musicology took over the role of music criticism. Among musicologists dealing with music criticism, the following should be mentioned: Anton Tsulukidze, Mzia Iashvili, Nana Kavtaradze, Rusudan Kutateladze, Gulbat Toradze, Lidya

Gogua, Rusudan Tsurtsunia, Marina Kavtaradze, and Nana Loria. There is no space to provide a comprehensive picture about the role of each of these experts, but all have certainly contributed to the development of Georgian music criticism. However, I will draw attention to specific topics: reconsideration of the tradition and musical language through global processes; the interrelation between musical language and contemporary compositional principles; evaluation of the recent trends via post-Soviet challenges; the role and place of the traditional Georgian music as a rich theme for Georgian musicology; and reconsideration of the Soviet legacy in Georgian music history.

The syncretism of music criticism and historiographical musicology in a Georgian reality was one of the ways to bridge the gap; the question about to what extent it was capable of changing the situation towards music criticism remains unanswered, but for Georgian music, criticism linking historiography with music criticism was an inevitable fact. At the same time, it had both strong and weak sides. First, let me list the strong features:

Musicologists identify the value of the artwork and stylistic features and critically evaluate the importance and worth of it, while the music critic deals with 'hot material' and delivers it with the great effect of subjectivity. (Orjonikidze 1985: 228)

On the other hand, this interrelation reveals the weakness as well; it prevented the Georgian music criticism school from being formed separately. The historiographical approach did not allow the music criticism field to be formed separately, either, and I would assert that the problem mentioned by Orjonikidze has been topical for Georgian music criticism up to this point.

Music Criticism after the fall of the Soviet Union

Mamardashvili Merab:⁷

During the twentieth century, we have permanently been on the edge of two contradicting conjunctures, we permanently experience concern, we continuously have to make choice, and most importantly we face the challenge of being involved in the entire global world. We have to understand relevantly all transformations but simultaneously be able to self-identify with the own cultural space and values. (Mamardashvili 2012: 16)

Basically, while talking about the post-Soviet period, we consider the period of the 1990s before the Rose Revolution. However, the post-Soviet condition did not end in the brutal 1990s but revealed long-lasting consequences of 70 years of occupation.

The new reality of the brutal 1990s had a certain amount of tolerance towards experiments and individualism. It was obvious that Georgian music criticism as well as the

musicological school had to find ways to overcome the Soviet legacy.

Let me expand on that from the above-mentioned perspectives. The generation of composers from the 1990s, which included Maya (Maka) Virsaladze and Eka Chabashvili, still coped with the social-political turbulence as a result of the fall of the Soviet Union. Pulling down the barriers of the old ideological system was accompanied by challenges. However, for the process of rebirth it was important to do away with the "unique" Soviet experience, to learn and adapt to the information, to learn how to swim in a space without restrictions and make mistakes.

The Chinese use two brush strokes to write the word "crisis:" the first one stands for danger and the other for opportunity. In other words, "crisis" may be described as an awareness of danger, but at the same time it is recognized as an opportunity. The development of art is the history of crisis and perceived possibilities. The turn of the century in Georgia is often characterized as a period of deep crisis due to the political-economic circumstances, as well as cultural development. The crisis that Georgian music criticism experienced in the 1990s encompassed both danger and opportunity for its further development. The opportunity was seen as a chance to gain its own place on the musical map, to become a part of the vivid musical processes, to break free from the "semi-true reality." Consequently, it has been reflected in recent works of such Georgian musicologists and music critics as Kavtaradze, Tsurtsunia, Loria, Gvinjilia, Dekanosidze, and Nadareishvili (Sharikadze 2017: 38).

What defines the danger in particular? The changes in the language and perception of the role of the music critic would not have changed suddenly. The process of disgracing the critics had ended, but the result itself continued to recall that 70-year-old trauma.

How was the crisis reflected by the Georgian music critics? How could they overcome the "musical behavior" which had become a tradition? It's essential to understand what factors made an impact on the development of the music criticism concept. What was the main driver for the changes?

The substance of the 1990s might be described as a time of immense complexity: Georgia went through several wars, and it was an epoch of big dreams and expectation as well as disappointments and disillusion, a time when the young generation lacked experience and simultaneously was not able to use the past experience of its forefathers, a time when the Soviet past turned out to be not useful at all. Keeping in mind all ideological rules, Georgia was thrown into a completely free space "without any rules."

Music critics had had to use their own ideas to find the way out. Unfortunately, only political change was not enough. It was not about resisting or following the rules anymore but more about building a new system of values and reconsideration of the music critic's own role and function

in a newly born country. At the end of the last century, the process of the reconsideration and redesign of values had started and run its natural course, but it still developed in a complex way.

The turn of the century gave space to everyone in terms of development. The question about to what extent Georgian music broke free from the “unique” Soviet experience could not be explicitly answered. Considering recent 25-year history, the newly gained freedom and independence had its hidden threats, but it had simultaneously offered enormous opportunities (like the Chinese word for crisis) for further development. If we briefly take a look back, then the following can be seen: the sense of freedom and no control turned on its head the approach to music criticism. Removing censorship and rules gave birth to new circumstances that required more flexibility and readiness to adapt to a new existence. However, not all problems familiar from Soviet times disappeared. Georgia still faced old but intimate problems about values in music criticism; the “old, trusted” criteria’s according to which value should have been measured were not in place anymore. That was only one side of the problem. Another no less important issue was the fact that a mismatch between the market demand and the ability to supply it with a sufficient workforce created a pool for self-educated “specialists,” music lovers with relatively good taste and knowledge about the field. Everyone became a critic; the ability to write with easy and understandable language was enough to gain a name as a music critic. The majority of music critics did not have an academic background. They were mostly musicians coming from the underground music scene. Having no formal music education had become a sign of the 1990s. Furthermore, the music education of Georgia was not able to fill the gap either, since music criticism has never been offered as part of study programs within higher education, and music criticism was not delivered as a separate study program at the Tbilisi State Conservatoire until 2012. Thus, on one hand, there were plenty of TV shows, radio programs, and newspapers covering the entertainment industry and giving opportunities to younger individuals to realize their potential. On the other hand, there was less interest towards academic music and professionals with the proper music education. The majority of those working in the music criticism field had never had the opportunity to receive an academic education; very few of those musicologists having graduated from Tbilisi State Conservatoire have found a job on TV and or at Radio Muza (2006–2017).

The utmost attention was paid to music banned by the Soviets, such as rock, jazz, and electronic music. This satisfied the needs of the audience, which was given the chance to listen to and enjoy music from the “Soviet underground.” During the Thaw and stagnation period, listening to the music of the underground was a synonym for freedom

and a way to secretly resist the standing reality. During the post-Soviet era, it lost the connotation of being forbidden fruit. Nevertheless, few TV shows were nationally broadcast about academic music.⁸ In recent years, interest has gained in professional music critics, which was a result of the establishment of the TV show *Musicologos* and *Unknown Music* from the company Public Broadcast as well as the opening of Radio Muza, which explicitly dealt with classical music. Other entertainment programs had had their own space as well. These forms of media had their own target audience, and Public Broadcast was trying to achieve the goals of “inform, educate, and entertain.”

The situation has changed in last two years: TV programs such as *Musicologos* and *Unknown Music* have been terminated, and Radio Muza has been shut down. Radio Muza played a crucial role in the further development of music critics in Georgia. Several generations of radio music critics were raised there.

Furthermore, societies like *Komunikatori* and *Komuna* were founded by the musicians from the so-called “underground” musical scene. The internet page *Komuna* was established with the aim of creating a space for the Georgian-speaking society to communicate and for members to express their ideas about music.

So, politically driven art and music criticism was replaced with market-driven ideas. Although there were plenty of open work positions in the media due to the newly established private media companies (radios, TVs, newspapers, magazines), it’s not easy to find an opening for professional music critics so far.

Conclusion

The history about the Georgian music critics is about the history of mortification and oppression. Music critics were politically driven for 70 years, and it took more than 20 years since the Soviet Union’s collapse to step over the line of severe censorship and feel free in judging independently. Music criticism reflected the turbulence of the country’s political and cultural development and strived, on one hand, to survive in the period of the Red Terror through building close ties between the historiography and music criticism. On the other hand, music critics became a voice of the censors in the process of evaluation of art pieces.

“Mortification of culture” (Kavtaradze’s note) prevented the Georgian music criticism school from developing critical concepts and ideas; as it was claimed by Mamardashvili that the Soviet Union represented at country where attacking freedom formed the main attitude for the culture (Mamardashvili 1987). It also created the form of its realization and transformed music critics into servants of the ideology with a secondary role.

After the fall of the regime, Georgian music critics have still been in the process of gaining back their role and function. Georgian music criticism has been striving to find strength and develop the instinct to ride the waves of a second transitional period—from the Soviet condition to post-Soviet—into opportunity, which paradoxically began in the brutal '90s. We do hope that the better days for Georgian music critics are still to come.

Endnotes

- ¹ In Georgia, it happened in 1937 (20 years after the conservatoire was founded).
- ² The Romanian born German novelist, poet, essayist and 2009 Nobel Prize receiver in literature for *The Land of Green Plums* (1996)
- ³ Vano Muradeli (1908–1970), in 1946 awarded the Stalin Prize. In 1948, his opera *The Great Friendship* was censured by the resolution of the Communist Party Central Committee. After Joseph Stalin's death, he was restored to favor and granted the title of the People's Artist of the USSR in 1968. An author of mass songs, a typical "law-abiding" Soviet composer
- ⁴ *The Great Friendship* (1947) was premiered in Donetsk on 28 September 1947 and given its Moscow premiere at the Bolshoi Theatre, on 7 November 1947 (The first performance was in Moscow at the Bolshoi Theatre on 7 November 1947, the date of the Revolution's 30th anniversary). Joseph Stalin attended a performance at the Bolshoi on 5 January 1948 and strongly disapproved of the opera. This led to a significant purge, often referred to as the *Zhdanovshchina* of the musical life of the Soviet Union.
- ⁵ Sergo Orjonikidze, one of the leaders of the Bolshevik Revolution, a friend of Stalin and his compatriot. Orjonikidze shot himself in 1937 anticipating arrest by his former friend; however, his death had at that time been announced as caused by heart failure. Orjonikidze served as a commissar for Ukraine, fighting the White Army under Anton Denikin.
- ⁶ After the premier, Zhdanov officially met Muradeli (the composer) and Leontiev (the director of the Bolshoi Theatre) After the meeting, Leontiev died due to the heart failure.
- ⁷ Merab Mamardashvili (1930–1990), a prominent Georgian philosopher
- ⁸ It's not possible to list all the musical programs aired through the Public Broadcaster, but I will name few of them: Georgian voices, art club, children's song festival, Basti Bubu, Maestro, Memory, Unknown music, Saturday evening at Lisa, and Live music. These are the names of the music programs from 2007 to 2017 (Barabadze, 2017).

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Santrauka

Susiformavusi praėjusio amžiaus pradžioje, Gruzijos muzikos kritikos mokykla atspindi neramią šalies istoriją nuo jos Nepriklausomybės, Rusijos įvykdytos aneksijos 1921 m., iki pat Nepriklausomybės atkūrimo 1992-aisiais. Straipsnyje glaustai apibendrinama Gruzijos muzikos kritikos raida sovietiniais ir posovietiniais laikais.

Autore išskiria šiuos pagrindinius muzikos kritikos raidos laikotarpius:

1. Muzikos kritika iki Stalino mirties. Laikotarpis nuo 1921-ųjų iki Stalino mirties 1953 m. skirstomas į du etapus:
 - 3–4 dešimtmetis, arba sovietų režimo pradžia, kai prisitaikoma prie naujų gyvenimo taisyklių. Šiuo okupacijos laikotarpiu įvedamos ir tam tikros „muzikinio elgesio“ taisyklės, tiksliau – tuo metu pirmosios kartos gruzinų kompozitoriai išgyvena pereinamąjį laikotarpį, susidurdami su būtinybe prisitaikyti prie naujosios tikrovės;
 - 1936–1953, taip pat Raudonasis teroras ir Stalino represijos ketvirtame dešimtmetyje, kai vykdomos nepaklusniųjų egzekucijos, kritika (taip pat ir muzikos) pasitelkiama kaip valstybės teroro simbolis. Stalinas okupuoja menus. Šį procesą galima suskirstyti į kelis etapus: 1) Gruziją užvaldo 1937 m. drastiškai įvestos cenzūros siaubas, trukęs iki pat penkto dešimtmečio

pabaigos; 2) 1946 m. įvedama Stalino dešinioios rankos Andrejaus Ždanovo sukurta kultūros doktrina.

2. Muzikos kritika po Stalino mirties, 7–9 dešimtmetyje: atšilimo laikotarpis, stagnacija ir *glasnost* era. Čia ne tiek aprašomi Stalino režimo ar atšilimo laikotarpio nulemti faktai, kiek aiškinama muzikos kritikų elgsena sovietiniais ir posovietiniais laikais. Viena vertus, šis Gruzijos muzikos kritikos raidos etapas sutampa su laikotarpiu, kai gvildenami ideologiniai ir poideologiniai klausimai; kita vertus, jis susiduria su daugybe problemų, susijusių su galimybe laisvai rinktis ir priimti nepriklausomus sprendimus.

3. Posovietinė era. Praeito šimtmečio paskutinį dešimtmetį iškyla įtampą kelianti dilema bandant nubrėžti liniją tarp ideologijos ir gebėjimo spręsti nepriklausomai; žmonės buvo verčiami pasirinkti „vienintelę teisingą pusę“. Nors posovietinėje eroje vyrauja „visiškos laisvės“, kontrolės atsisakymo idėja, tai nereiškia, kad visos iš sovietinių laikų paveldėtos problemos dinga.

Gruzijos muzikos kritikos istorija – tai priespaudos ir engimo istorija. 70 metų muzikos kritiką valdė politika, o Sovietų Sąjungai žlugus, prirėkė 20 metų, kad būtų peržengtos griežtos cenzūros ribos ir priimami laisvi ir nepriklausomi sprendimai. „Kultūros engimas“ (Marijos Kavtaradzės terminas) neleido Gruzijos muzikos kritikos mokyklai sukurti savo koncepcijų ir idėjų; kaip sakė Mėras Mamardašvilis, Sovietų Sąjungoje pagrindinis kultūrai skiriamas vaidmuo – pulti laisvę (Mamardashvili 1987), be to, valstybė pati kūrė kultūros realizavimo formas, o muzikos kritiką pavertė nepagrindinį vaidmenį atliekančia tarnaitė.

Griuvus režimui, Gruzijos muzikos kritika vis dar siekia atsikovoti savo vaidmenį ir svarbiausią paskirtį. Gruzijos muzika rado jėgų ir gyvybinių impulsų paversti antrąjį virsmą nuo sovietinės iki posovietinės eros galimybe; gana paradoksalu, kad tai įvyko brutaliaisiais dešimto dešimtmečio laikais. Tikimės, kad ir Gruzijos muzikos kritika sulauks geresnių laikų.

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