

ABSTRACTS

Pascal LÉCROART

**The Music of Soviet Russia
as Seen by *Le Ménestrel* (1920-1940)**

At the beginning of the 20th century, France experienced a musical Russophilia with Diaghilev's Ballets Russes. This benefited the works of Rimsky-Korsakov, Stravinsky and Prokofiev in particular. But this Russophilia was not profitable to the reception of the new Soviet composers who belonged to a Communist regime that was then arousing hostility and mistrust. In fact, during the interwar period, there were very few concert opportunities for them. However, bonds were maintained through the intermediary of musical journals. Based on the issues published between 1920 and 1940 by the weekly magazine *Le Ménestrel*, the article highlights the different faces of Soviet musical life as they were perceived in France. Through this study, we can discover the history of Soviet music, going from the consequences of the Bolshevik revolution to the aesthetic subjugation willed by Stalin, and explore a period of extraordinary inventiveness and creativity resulting from the support the new regime afforded to the arts scene.

Sylvie MAMY

**Feodor Chaliapin's Exile in Paris,
According to the Autobiographical Work *Man and Mask* (1932)**

After about ten years in exile, once settled in Paris, the great Russian opera singer Feodor Chaliapin (1873-1938) published an autobio-

graphical essay titled in Russian *Mask and Soul* (*Man and Mask* in English). In it he talked about his art, his major roles (Boris Godunov, Ivan the Terrible, Mephistopheles, Salieri...) and developed at length the question of the artistic decline of his country after the Russian Revolution and the rise of Bolshevism. He explained why he had decided to leave his country in 1922. While Chaliapin has been called a revolutionary, a Bolshevik or even a monarchist, in this book he asserted his political independence. Over the course of the book, the reader easily perceives how much the great singer loved his country and how painful his exile was, despite his triumphs on international stages.

Marie-Christine AUTANT-MATHIEU

**The Tours of the Soviet Theatre in Paris in the Interwar Period
or the Impossible Export of “Theatrical October”**

The article starts by describing the breadth of what French audiencea expected and touching upon the political and artistic context of the 1920sand 1930s, which went back and forth between openness to international exchanges, curiosity for theatrical “Bolshevism” and mistrust of iconoclastic experiments. The article then studies the tours of the Moscow Art Theatre (1922, 1923, 1937), Chamber Theatre (1923 and 1930) and Meyerhold Theatre (1930). What debates did these tours raise, what repercussions did they have on French cultural life? Antoine, Copeau, Gémier, Hébertot, as well as a majority of critics, declared after the Moscow Art Theatre’s tour that they had received a “lesson” of collective discipline, of devotion to art, of choral work. The realistic acting underlying the plays did not require any special adaptation from the audience, who saw characters they could relate to. The arrival of the Chamber Theatre, on the contrary, shifted the paradigms of a traditional performance. It is no coincidence that the event was hailed as a success by ballet specialists and painters like Cocteau and Léger. In addition, the choice of repertoire was seen as a provocation because it presented plays by three French authors, including Racine with *Phèdre*. The liberties taken by the director endangered a text-centric tradition that French artists – even reformers and members of the Cartel – refused to question. Supported by the French theatrical milieu, Meyerhold played his trump card with this trip which he imposed when the Soviet authorities recalled him to Moscow. Since the summer of 1928 he had been facing serious difficulties and his theatre had almost closed. It was against this backdrop of threats and material difficulties that the

tour took place. It caused a shock. The French remained perplexed, the émigrés rose up against the texts of Gogol and Ostrovsky atomised into episodes and spoken by actors jumping, capering and sliding on “playing machines” as a backdrop. Openings abroad closed in the summer of 1930 for Soviet companies. Only the Moscow Art Theatre was allowed to return to Paris in 1937 as a showcase for socialist realism, a propaganda tool within the framework of the World Exposition. The closing of the borders until the “Thaw” and the disappearance of the Soviet avant-garde prevented an assimilation, a crossbreeding which could have been fruitful if the exchanges had been able to be renewed regularly and in both directions.

Thomas THISSELIN

**Stravinsky's Reception in France between 1945 and 1956.
A Review of the Communist Press**

I propose to explore how Igor Stravinsky's work was received in France between 1945 and 1956. The post-war Stalinist era (extended to the immediate period after Stalin's death) represents the acme of Stalinist dictatorship, and to this day remains the most mysterious period in Soviet history. The reception of Soviet music raises many questions, notably the political, national and international considerations that regulated its production, and the control strategies at play such as the speeches that gave it meaning. The public reception of a musical work contributes to establishing its value or that of an artist; it appears that certain third parties, more or less involved with the audiences and the artists or their work, may seek to control the latter's reception in order to “benefit” from it. Igor Stravinsky is a singular figure; he was naturalised as a French citizen in 1934 before taking American citizenship eleven years later. Although Soviet music news was widely covered by sympathising French periodicals, one can presuppose a heterogeneity of views, depending on the level of subordination to political interests and to professional principles or hedonistic (or ‘consumerist’) expectations. The point here is to determine whether the interpretations of Stravinsky's work are detached from certain political matters. The composer's overall clout in the French musical landscape as well as the great diversity of styles that characterises his work reaffirm the differences of appreciation in their reception. And while musicological analysis shows that his music soon evolved beyond its initial Soviet tone, it is interesting to examine whether the supporting press saw him as a ‘cosmopolitan, stateless person’ or as an exiled Russian.

Maud CAILLAT

The Participation of Soviet Contestants in the Marguerite Long Competition from 1953 to 1979 and its Impact in France

In June 1953, three months after the death of Stalin, the first Soviet pianists were allowed to come to Paris to participate in the Long-Thibaud competition. Although their presence undoubtedly enhanced its prestige, it caused a stir among the French public and the press alike, due to the international context. As for the new image the USSR wanted to convey, it no longer relied on musicians travelling to France “for both artistic and political purposes”. Instead, it sought to promote young virtuosos who embodied “the musical excellence of their country and the socialist regime”, the Moscow Tchaikovsky Conservatory becoming a “showcase of communism” in the 1970s. This turning point in the evolution of Soviet artistic propaganda raises different questions: who was the target audience (professional musicians, music lovers, intellectuals, etc.), did the regime officials limit themselves to highlighting the exploits of young musicians selected and trained within the Soviet-Russian piano school, or did they seek to influence the French musical world? Did they aim at exporting a replica of the specialized music teaching system, which did not exist in France?

Jasmine JACQ

**The “Medvedkin Groups” (1967-1974),
Late Transfer of Soviet Agitprop Culture?**

From 1967 to 1974, collectives of worker-filmmakers called “Medvedkin groups” were formed in France in the wake of the strikes in the textile and automobile industries of Besançon and Sochaux, under the impetus of filmmaker Chris Marker (1921-2012). In France, these groups represented both a social and creative experiment in militant cinema, characterised by the workers’ own appropriation of the film-making process in the service of an autonomous and reflexive representation of their struggles. But what does Medvedkin stand for? For Marker, it was a question of materialising a filiation between the ideological and militant struggle of the Soviet filmmaker Aleksandr Medvedkin (1900-1989) in the 1920s and early 1930s in the USSR (embodied by his “film-train”), and that of the French workers. For him, these two struggles were fundamentally linked, since the French workers, from the end of 1967, expressed the will (as Medvedkin invited

Russian workers and peasants to do) to appropriate the cinematographic discourse that concerned them.

Joël CHAPRON

**Export and Worldwide Promotion of Russian Cinema...
or Russian Movies? (1908-2020)**

(Interview, by Jasmine Jacq)

Pre-Revolutionary Russian cinema was little known beyond national borders. However the Soviet regime soon wanted its Seventh Art to conquer foreign souls. While censorship hindered Soviet films in many countries before the Second World War, it almost completely disappeared during the conflict – only to reappear immediately afterwards. The image of the victorious USSR did not last long because of the Cold War and political international conflicts. Except during the Thaw years, Soviet cinema never succeeded in achieving the political and commercial goals that the Kremlin had set for it. Official films then gave way to those which the government did not wish to promote, but which foreign viewers relished (Tarkovsky, Paradzhanov, Iosseliani...) and which delighted film-lovers. The Perestroika changed the landscape. After nearly fifteen years of virtual absence, Russian cinema came back, with animated films and author's films which featured in major festivals, but still did not conquer the mainstream population.

Marija PODZOROVA

**“We Must Prepare Seriously” : Circulation of Soviet Art
in France in an International Perspective in the Interwar Period**

Following the October Revolution, France became one of the target countries for Soviet cultural diplomacy. However, multiple political, cultural and / or aesthetic constraints made it difficult to promote the art of Soviet Russia in France. Thus, the Berlin exhibition of 1922 was not sent to Paris, although the project was discussed by organisers. Likewise, in 1924, the Soviets planned to ship part of the works from the Soviet Pavilion in Venice to Paris, but this project was not successful either. Diplomatic recognition facilitated artistic exchanges, but Soviet representatives struggled to develop coherent aesthetic projects for Paris, and favoured exhibitions in other Western countries. The aim of this paper is to analyse, through the circulation of Soviet art on the international level, artistic encounters often missed with the French public.

Tatiana TRANKVILLITSKAIA
**Pierre Vorms and the Soviet Authorities:
Links of Interest in the Interwar Period**
(From Russian archives)

In the interwar period, Soviet ideological art remained relatively unknown in France. To the great disappointment of the Soviet authorities, no bilateral institutional programme of Franco-Soviet artistic exchange existed at that time and few Soviet exhibitions were organised in France. However, there were some real “mediators” on French soil who took an active part in the organisation of these events, alongside the official Soviet authorities. This was the case of Pierre Vorms, director of the Billiet-Vorms gallery, whose role in the world of left-wing French art was highly appreciated by the artistic authorities of the Soviet Union. It is because of his convictions and enthusiasm that he is often mentioned in Soviet exchange reports of the 1930s and continued to cooperate despite several failures in joint projects. We will take a closer look at his interest in the USSR, his career as an organiser of Soviet art exhibitions in France, and his exchange projects in the 1930s. As his archives are closed, this study is based on data from Russian archives.

Natacha MILOVZOROVA
**The Reception of the Paris-Moscow Exhibition (1979):
A Discordant Chorus**

In 1979, the *Paris-Moscow* exhibition opened in the newly inaugurated Centre Pompidou. It proposed, for the first time in Europe, a large-scale panorama of Russian and French art of the first three decades of the 20th century. The show was prepared in partnership with the USSR and included both realist – from the Ambulants to the forerunners of Socialist Realism – and Avant-garde artwork, the latter being for a long time hidden in the storage of the Soviet museums. In France, these artistic and political choices evoked a range of opposing reactions in the press, among visitors, intellectuals, and Soviet dissident artists. Our attempt consists in analysing this reception as a “touchstone” that reveals sensitive points of this era.

Dimitri FILIMONOV

**Inviting Soviet Artists to France in 1953-1955:
Political Ambition, Cultural Action, or Business?**

This article presents a study of the actors who made the Franco-Soviet cultural exchanges possible between 1953 and 1956, after a long interruption. A reflection on this subject was done thanks to the crossing of French and Russian diplomatic archive sources, as well as articles from the French press. In the first stage, the article proposes a detailed study of the French political and diplomatic actors involved in a long process of invitation of Soviet artists to France. It seemed important to reconstruct the decision-making process in the cultural cooperation with the Soviets, decisions that were informal at the time because a bilateral cooperation agreement was only signed in 1956. In fact, the preparations for these first non-institutionalized exchanges, carried out under the discreet supervision of the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs, passed through private actors such as the Parisian literary and artistic agency (ALAP). In the second part, the article offers a study of a specific case: that of the tour of the Moiseyev ballets in Paris in 1955, one of the first major events in artistic cooperation between France and the USSR. Based on unpublished documents on the organization of the tour, cross-referenced with information from press articles and testimonies of participants, this study seeks to reveal the singular character of the rapprochement between two states. Between cultural history and diplomatic history, this study proposes new elements to the history of Franco-Soviet relations.

Samuel DÉGARDIN

**Area of Influence of Russian Graphic Arts in France
during the Interwar Period**

Ahead of the October Revolution, the Russian avant-gardes contributed to a revival of the arts and their socio-political function with the proletariat. Spearhead of this ideology, Constructivism became very popular and was taught in new structures such as the VKHOUTEMAS (Higher State Art and Technical Workshops). The importance given to the graphic arts was not foreign to the implementation of propaganda art. In France, the 1925 Exhibition of Decorative Arts showed some of this at the USSR Pavilion. Its influence also became apparent later on, in the layouts of the photographic magazine *VU*, the giant photomontages of Charlotte Perriand and the Père Castor children's books.

Fabien BELLAT
**French Architectural Journals
and the Soviet Reconstruction**

The end of the occupation in France redefined the existing press, including architectural magazines. Thus *L'Architecture française* had to forget its previous Pétainist editorial line, and *La Construction moderne* sought to recreate its lost link with current affairs. Promoting more modernity, *L'Architecture d'aujourd'hui*, which had stopped publishing during the war as a refusal of the Nazi diktats, resumed its work in 1945. Faced with the USSR, these three major publications had very different reactions, hesitating between intellectual curiosity and misunderstanding of Soviet creative conditions. Thus their articles on the work carried out in Stalingrad, Leningrad, Sevastopol, Novorossiysk or Minsk reveal both the USSR's expectations and the perception of French journals of a Stalinist scene, for them deemed to be very strange.