SESSION SEVEN
THE SECOND GENERATION

So far we have examined how Socialist Realism affected the first generation of Soviet composers: Sergei Prokofiev, born in 1891, and Dmitri Kabalevsky, Aram Khachaturian, and Dmitri Shostakovich, all born in the first decade of the 20th century.

Last week I posed this question, “If you were a Soviet-era composer and were suddenly freed from all government restrictions, what kind of music would you write? That sounds like a hypothetical question, one that no composer would ever have to consider, but in fact it was a very real question for the second generation of Soviet-era composers. How they answered this question is the subject of today’s class session.

PRELUDE
Our Prelude today is not a piece of music but the words of Winston Churchill. On March 5, 1946, scarcely nine months after being voted out as Prime Minister of Great Britain, he delivered a memorable speech in the small college town of Fulton, MO.

PLAY/DISCUSS

IRON CURTAIN TEXT

From Stettin in the Baltic to Trieste in the Adriatic, an iron curtain has descended across the Continent. Behind that line lie all the capitals of the ancient states of Central and Eastern Europe. Warsaw, Berlin, Prague, Vienna, Budapest, Belgrade, Bucharest and Sofia, all these famous cities and the populations around them lie in what I must call the Soviet sphere, and all are subject in one form or another, not only to Soviet influence but to a very high and, in many cases, increasing measure of control from Moscow.

IRON CURTAIN MAP
The result of the “Iron Curtain” was to wall off the states of Eastern Europe from influence from the West, and to insure that they would be dependent economically, politically, and culturally on the Soviet Union. In each of these satellite states Soviet-style governments were quickly installed and Soviet-like policies were enacted, including policies to align the arts with the values and goals of their new governments. As a result, artists in these nations were subject to the same system Socialist Realism as were Soviet Russian artists.

THE KRUSCHEV “THAW,” 1954-1964
Eight years after Churchill’s “Iron Curtain” speech, under the rule of Nikita Khrushchev, Joseph Stalin was widely denounced, millions of political
prisoners were released, and there was a new focus on consumer goods, public housing, and other policies that would improve the lives of ordinary Russian citizens. In the arts Social Realism continued, but many of its policies were relaxed. Soviet composers and other musicians, found it easier to travel abroad, and foreign visitors were allowed greater access to Russia. Cultural exchanges between Russia and other nations increased dramatically.

**HOW MUCH THAW IS PERMITTED?**
The Soviet satellite states of Eastern Europe followed suit, in various ways allowing Soviet policies to be liberalized or relaxed.

- In the People’s Republic of Hungary, a nationwide revolution in the fall of 1956 forced a change of government, which was quickly crushed by the Russian army.

- In the People’s Republic of Czechoslovakia, a liberation movement called the “Prague Spring” brought widespread reforms in 1968, but was also crushed by the Russian Army six months later.

- In the People’s Republic of Poland, a more liberal Communist government took power in 1956, and took the unusual step of doing away with all censorship of the arts; thus Polish composers had fuller access to music of the West and were free to compose as they wished. The music we are about to hear reflects these changes.

Can you speculate what kinds of music these composers might create, if suddenly freed from the restrictions of Soviet Realism?

**MID-CENTURY MUSIC IN THE WEST**
From the beginning of Socialist Realism around 1930 until the Khrushchev “thaw” of the mid-1950s, Soviet-era composers had been isolated from the music of their fellow composers in the West. As they resumed contact with the music of the West they became aware of a distinctive new musical style. The main characteristics of this style are:

- a preference for instrumental sounds do not blend, rather than for the blended sounds of string-dominated groups

- a much more prominent use of percussion instruments

- a preference for music that does not have a steady beat

- a preference for discontinuous music that sounds improvised rather than composed
• the widespread use of electronically-generated sounds, alone or in combination with the sounds of traditional instruments.

BOULEZ, LA MARTEAU SANS MAÎTRE, 1955
Although no single piece of music contains all these features, “La Marteau sans maître” (The Hammer without a Master), a 1955 composition by the French composer, Pierre Boulez, is characteristic.

La Marteau is a setting of nine poems by René Char for contralto and six instruments: Xylorimba, Vibraphone, Guitar, Alto Flute, Viola, and Voice.

SECOND/GENERTION SOVIET COMPOSERS
With this brief background, let’s turn our attention to music of the second generation of Soviet-era composers.

KRZYSZTOF PENDERECKI PIC
Krzystof Penderecki, born in 1933, is part of the second generation of Soviet Polish composers, and is still active today at age 84. He has been a prolific composer in many musical genres, including 4 operas, 8 symphonies, and many concertos and choral works. Both his biography and his music are distinctly different from that of the Soviet Russian composers we have heard so far. First and most important, he is a devout Christian, and many of his major works are sacred in nature. And unlike Soviet Russian composers, he has been interested in creating new instrumental and orchestral sounds.

THRENODY FOR THE VICTIMS OF HIROSHIMA, 1960
Penderecki’s most famous work is “Threnody (lament) for the Victims of Hiroshima,” which caused a sensation throughout the world of music when it was published in 1960. Threnody was written for 52 stringed instruments, which are often played in unusual ways, including near the bridge and on the wooden parts of the instrument. Over the years Penderecki’s music has been widely recorded and has won many international awards, including five Grammy awards in the United States.

The music also uses compositional techniques, including tone clusters and aleatory passages, never before used in Soviet music.

HENRYK GORECKI PIC
The second major Soviet Polish composer was Henryk Gorecki. Like Penderecki, his deep Roman Catholic faith has always been one of the most important influences on his music. A second important influence has been the multicultural environment in which he was raised:

I was born in Silesia. It is old Polish land, but there were always three cultures: Polish, Czech, and German. The folk art, all the art, had no boundaries. Polish culture is a wonderful mixture. When you look at the history of Poland, it is precisely the multiculturalism, the presence of the so-called minorities that made Poland what it was. The cultural wealth, the diversity mixed and created a new entity.

MAP OF SILESIA

SYMPHONY POF SORROWFUL SONGS, 1976
Gorecki’s best known work is also a “threnody,” a lament to parents who have lost their children in war, or children who have lost their parents. His “Symphony of Sorrowful Songs” is a three-movement symphony with solo voice. Its first recording, featuring the American soprano, Dawn Upshaw, sold more than a million copies and remains the best-selling classical recording of all time.

Today we’re going to listen to the second movement, a radiant piece based on a message found scrawled on the wall of a Nazi concentration camp cell by an 18-year-old Polish girl who lost her Mother:

No, Mother, do not weep,
Most chaste Queen of Heaven
Help me always.
Hail Mary.

PLAY
A second answer to our questions would be, they would write music that comments on current ethical issues, based on their pre-Soviet religious traditions.

SOVIET RUSSIAN MUSIC AFTER STALIN
Now let’s return to music of the Soviet Union. Here, too, the cultural thaw promoted by Nikita Khrushchev resulted in a gradual relaxation of Socialist Realism guidelines beginning in the mid-1950s. As a result, both the first and the second generation of Soviet Russian composers felt less confined and somewhat freer to follow their own paths to musical expression. The music of the second generation, especially, was more cosmopolitan, that is, less influenced by folk and patriotic traditions of Russia, and more strongly influenced by music of composers in other nations.
Let’s turn our attention now to the music of two Soviet Russian composers born around 1930, whose music is widely known and performed throughout the world. These composers are Rodion Shchedrin, born 1932, and Alfred Schnittke, born 1934.

**RODION SHCHEDRIN PIC**
Rodion Shchedrin is the best-known of the second-generation Soviet composers. He has been a prolific composer in all musical genres: ballet, symphony, concertos, and chamber music. As a virtuoso pianist he has performed his six piano concertos throughout the world. Since the fall of the Iron Curtain in 1989 he has spent much time in the West, dividing his time between Munich and Moscow. He holds dual citizenship in Russia, Lithuania, and Spain.

**DOCUMENTARY FILM, “CONCERTO CANTABILE” (48 MIN)**
As a background to this important composer I highly recommend a 48-minute film, “Concerto Cantabile: Portrait of the Russian Composer.” It includes excerpts from concert performances of several of Shchedrin’s major works and some interesting commentary, in English, by the composer himself about his approach to writing music.

Compared to first-generation composers Shchedrin’s music is less patriotic and more inward-looking, less folk-based and more romantic, less Russian-sounding and more like contemporary western music; less dissonant and more romantic.

**CONCERTO FOR ORCHESTRA NO.1, 1963**
Here is something new: a funny, happy, playful Soviet piece based on a bawdy, vulgar Russian street song, and approved by the Union of Soviet Composers. This is the first of six concertos for orchestra, a one-movement piece for full orchestra. This performance is in the Aram Khachaturian Concert Hall in Armenia, with Shchedrin in the audience, applauding from the balcony.

**PLAY**
A third answer to our question is, they might write music based on popular musical and cultural traditions rather than political traditions, even including funny and bawdy sources.

**ALFRED SCHNITTKYE PIC**
Alfred Schnittke was born in Vienna in 1934, where his German parents worked as official translators and editors of government documents. He described his early musical training and experience in these words:

> I felt every moment (in Vienna) to be a link in the historical chain: all was multi-dimensional; the past represented a world of ever-present ghosts, and I was not a (foreigner) but the conscious bearer of the
past traditions. These experiences "gave me a certain spiritual experience and discipline for my future professional activities. It was Mozart and Schubert, not Tchaikovsky and Rachmaninoff, whom I kept in mind as reference points in terms of taste, manner and style. This reference point was essentially Classical.

At age 15 he moved to Moscow, where his parents had been posted to a new position. He completed his studies at the Moscow Conservatory and began a successful career as a composer of film scores, completing more than 70 in the next 30 years. In addition he composed in all musical genres, in a style that combined orthodox Soviet music, folk music, and more modern styles that had become popular in the West.

The Union of Soviet Composers was highly suspicious of Schnittke’s music and at one time banned it entirely, which led him to publish it and arrange performances in the West. He was unable to compose for several years after suffering a severe stroke at the age 50. After his health improved he moved permanently to Germany, where he composed in a style that was simpler and much more accessible by lay audiences.

**STRING QUARTET NO. 3, 1983**
Schnittke’s Third String Quartet is one of the most widely performed works in the entire post-1945 classical repertoire. It is a work of enormous concentration but has a sweet, almost familiar sound. From time to time it may actually be familiar, as it includes direct quotations from great composers of the past, including Lassus, Beethoven, and, of course, Shostakovich.

**PLAY**

A final answer to our question is, they might write music that is both emotionally complex and much more accessible to lay audiences.

**SUMMARY: THE SECOND GENERATION**
What kind of music might Soviet composers create if they were somewhat free of Socialist Realism policies:

- Like Penderecki, music inspired by world events, with new instrumental techniques of Western composers

- Like Gorecki, music inspired by current ethical issues, based on their pre-Soviet religious traditions
- Like Shchedrin, music based on popular musical and cultural traditions rather than political traditions, even including humorous and bawdy sources.

- Like Schnittke, music that is emotionally complex but much more familiar and traditional-sounding.