
Nikolai Myaskovsky – 140th birth anniversary. Rediscovering the composer in the present times

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Abstract: On the occasion of the 140th anniversary of composer Nikolai Myaskovsky’s birth, in the spring of 2021, in the city of Ekaterinburg there took place the *Myaskovsky Dialogues* festival dedicated entirely to the Russian composer, being one of the few musical events with a musical programme based on his works. Known as the “father” of the Soviet symphony, Nikolai Myaskovsky was one of the pillars of resistance in Russian music culture in the first half of the 20th century, managing to maintain a stylistic balance between traditional genres, harmonic language with innovative tendencies, ideas promoted within the new political system and a neutral way of integrating communist ideals musically. Although his contemporaries perceived him with respect and consideration, N. Myaskovsky was discredited after the tensions and political events of 1948, entering a shadow zone during the Cold War, until the fall of the Iron Curtain. Therefore, it was only in the last three decades that he was rediscovered in the music world, due to the interest given to his works by well-known conductors such as E. Svetlanov, V. Gergiev, V. Petrenko, V. Jurowski. In this paper, our aim is to accomplish a historical perspective on N. Myaskovsky's rediscovery and his approach in concert programs, records, reviews, chronicles, articles, musicological studies, papers and volumes from the 1970s to the present.

Keywords: Russian music, Western tradition, socialist realism, Soviet influences.

1. Introduction

1.1. Current stage of research on Nikolai Myaskovsky

Russian musical culture in the first half of the 20th century had an essential contribution to the development of modern musical language, through the diversification of an archaic style and the intertwining of specific modalism with traditional harmony and the avant-garde tendency in Western Europe. Along with the notorious musicians of this stage there are many composers left behind but their works have been rediscovered, recorded on discs and included again in the concert programmes after 1989, offering a new perspective on valuable works, almost unknown to the large public. Among these musicians is Nikolai Yakovlevich Myaskovsky (also written Myaskovsky/ Miaskovsky/ Miaskowsky, 1881-1950), composer, critic and pedagogue, known during his

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lifetime as the “Musical Consciousness of Moscow” (Rayskin, 2001, *Oxford Music Online*), and later as the “father” of the Soviet symphony.

During our search for deeper information about Myaskovsky, we discovered several sources with a general perspective, regarding the historical, socio-political, cultural-artistic context, some of them focusing on the fall of the Russian Empire, the implementation of the communist system and the influence of these events on Russian musicians. Two extensive volumes were written in this direction, with a major relevance about the history of Russian music: *Music and Musical Life in Soviet Russia, 1917-1970* by Boris Schwarz, published in 1983 and *Defining Russia Musically: Historical and Hermeneutic Essays* by Richard Taruskin, published in 1997. We also mention three research papers belonging to Marina Frolova-Walker (*From Modernism to Socialist Realism in Four Years: Myaskovsky and Asafyev*, 2003; *Stalin and the Art of Boredom*, 2004; *The Glib, the Bland, and the Corny: an Aesthetic of Socialist Realism*, 2009) and two studies written by Patrick Zuk (*Nikolay Myaskovsky and the events of 1948*, 2012; *Nikolay Myaskovsky and the “Regimentation” of Soviet Composition: A Reassessment*, 2014).

Regarding Myaskovsky's life and work, there are few sources for a thorough documentation, some of these materials being available in international databases: the book review signed by Vladimir Ussachevsky, who wrote about the biographical volume *Myaskovsky: His Life and His Work*, by Alexei (Alexandrei) Ikonnikov, published in 1946 and the article about Myaskovsky available in the *New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians (Oxford Music Online)*, signed by Iosif Genrikhovich Rayskin, published in 2001.

At the same time, our interest was directed to records, concert programmes, reviews and chronicles of musical events, by searching for articles in international databases from recent decades. We discovered some chronicles about N. Myaskovsky's symphonies, performed by symphonic orchestras from the Russian Federation/ Soviet Union in various artistic projects, focused on the rediscovery of the Russian music in the first half of the 20th century. Conductor Evgeny Svetlanov (1928-2002) coordinated a series of symphonic concerts in the last decade of his life in order to promote and record the full symphonies and orchestral works composed by N. Myaskovsky. These are currently available for purchase in physical format (collection of CDs), as well as electronically (in various formats, which are available online).

1.2. The importance of reconsidering a musician little known nowadays

Nikolai Myaskovsky's work has special value for the musical cultures in the Eastern European space, by approaching the traditional academic genres, which already had a long history in the West. During the 19th century, composers initiated the process of aligning Russian music with the Western European tradition, integrating particular elements of archaic folklore, historical past and

modalism of the specific Russian culture. Later, at the turning point between the centuries and during the first half of the 20th century, the process of synchronisation and mutual influence between Eastern and Western cultures of the European continent has gained amplitude and perseverance in the musical works of new generations of composers: on the one hand, Anatoly Lyadov, Aleksandr Glazunov, Alexander Scriabin, Sergei Rachmaninov continued the traditional romantic direction, which was initiated by Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky through his musical genres and features of sonorous language, while Igor Stravinsky, Sergei Prokofiev, Dmitri Shostakovich, Alfred Schnittke, Rodion Shchedrin, although started from the same traditional, classical-Romantic foundation, they developed in different directions, with innovative tendencies and modern aesthetic options, subsequently achieving syntheses between compositional styles, sonorous systems, musical genres.

Nikolai Myaskovsky is rather in the first category of composers, due to the predominantly classical-Romantic genres, the balanced musical language and the reserved attitude towards the avant-garde of the first decades of the 20th century. His works include 27 symphonies, three sinfoniettas, one divertissement for small orchestra and one dramatic overture for wind orchestra, two concertos (for violin, respectively cello and orchestra), thirteen string quartets, nine piano sonatas, several cycles of romances or songs for voice and piano. To a lesser extent, we find in Myaskovsky's works a less conservative tendency, in some symphonies conceived in a single movement (*Symphonies no. 10, 13, 21*) and some piano cycles with suggestive titles (*Eccentricities, Reminiscences, Yellowed Leaves, Stylisations, Polyphonic Sketches, Improvisations*), which are particular works due to their free, improvisational style, indicating an openness towards exploration and discovery of new sonorities, flexible structures and challenging composition techniques.

The value of his activity and works lies in the balanced manner of approaching and decanting the stylistic tendencies at that time, in the qualities he showed as a composition teacher at the Moscow Conservatory, where he taught for three decades, until the end of his life. Moreover, he was persistent in his ability to maintain a dignified, neutral attitude in front of the political pressures that followed the fall of the Russian Empire (1917) and the establishment of the communist regime, which determined a total change of socio-cultural paradigm in the history of Soviet Russia. Myaskovsky referred to some compositional criteria that he considered essential in his works: the quality of the content, the direct way of expressing musical ideas, the nobility of sonorous expression, the inner and outer form of the musical discourse. Although he had his own creative reference points and standards, Myaskovsky did not pursue the perfection of form, emphasising melody, timbre and harmonic language, in order to enhance the musical themes and to obtain a coherent discourse, with complex dramaturgy and tensional force. The

composer's musical “creed” aimed at the power of influence of these elements on the ideological norms and formalism imposed by the political system, shaping the musical structures according to the finality of the creative process.

2. Approaching Nikolai Myaskovsky's work based on specialised dictionaries and monographs

The article focused on N. Myaskovsky in the *New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians (Oxford Music Online)*, written by musicologist Iosif Genrikhovich Rayskin, manages to capture in a few paragraphs the key moments in the life and work of the composer, the general stylistic features of his creation and some particular observations on his main genres and works. Although the number of symphonies composed by Myaskovsky is impressive and raises suspicions about their relevance in the context of 20th century music (an aspect that was influenced, of course, by the ideological intrusion of the communist system into the work of musicians), the value of the 27 symphonies is highlighted by some distinctive elements, which indicate the composer's predilection for this genre, perceived as an appropriate framework for expressing his ideas and creative sensitivity. Along with the **symphony**, the other genres through which Myaskovsky created the fusion of Western tradition and Russian-impregnated musical content are the **string quartet** and **piano sonata**, both of them having a major importance in his work in the second half of his life, until 1949 (the year before his death).

We note the two directions drawn by the author of the article referring to Myaskovsky's compositional style: on the one hand, the affinity for the lyrical or epic manner of music (as the case may be), in the works created by M. Balakirev, A. Borodin and N. Rimski-Korsakov; on the other hand, the continuation of Tchaikovsky's romantic symphonism and the reflection of his powerful subjectivism. The last two symphonies emphasize a stylistic synthesis between these orientations and a nostalgic vision of the past, in search of a lost freedom from a vanished world, which had not yet been transformed by the extreme attitudes of the 20th century. Superficiality and lack of substance, imposed by coercive ideological norms or the avant-garde tendency to innovate at any cost have nullified previous tradition in the name of ostentatious emancipation. We keep in mind the comparison between the music of Nikolai Myaskovsky and the volumes in prose or lyrics by Boris Pasternak: “As with Pasternak in literature, Myaskovsky in music represented the phenomenon of inner emigration, a form of spiritual resistance to a suppressive regime.” (Rayskin, 2001, *Oxford Music Online*)

The process of documentation on the life and activity of N. Myaskovsky led us towards monographic research dedicated to the Russian composer. Thus, I discovered the volume entitled *Myaskovsky: His Life and Work*, written by Alexei Ikonnikov in collaboration with the composer himself in the last years of

his life. The book was published in 1946 in English by a publishing house from New York, while the Russian edition was postponed due to World War II. Later, the author added an additional section to mention Myaskovsky's work during the war, giving the composer a chance to see his work mirrored in the monograph signed by A. Ikonnikov before his death (1950). The volume is currently available in a revised and updated edition, published in 2011, also in English, by a publishing house from Montana, USA. From its first appearance, the volume was received with interest due to the information provided in real time about Soviet music composed inside the Soviet Union, respecting the conditions and principles existing before and after the establishment of the communist political regime. As information about Russian music culture was increasingly censored and filtered through the control of all means of verbal and artistic expression, researchers outside the Soviet territory were concerned with the artist's relationship with society in general and also with the reflection of the socio-political context in his work.

In the beginning of the book, the author makes a brief presentation of the composer's biography, so as to focus later on his works and features of musical language. The portrait of N. Myaskovsky is conceived in a balanced approach, based on the beginning of his career in the period of imperial Russia, marked by the interference of traditional elements with modern tendencies specific to the beginning of the 20th century, to which were added the stylistic aspects determined by the Revolution of 1917 and the change of the political context. The volume reflects the personality of N. Myaskovsky as a respected Soviet composer, who adapted to new musical principles while maintaining the balance between content and form, tradition and innovation, between his own style and the features of socialist realism. The author of the monograph emphasises Myaskovsky's significant contribution to the development of traditional genres in the context of Russian culture and the surprising prolificacy both in terms of quantity and quality, experimenting different structural typologies and semantic hypostases of the symphony, string quartet and piano sonata. In addition to the general biographical and creative aspects that shape Myaskovsky's compositional profile, the volume also includes sections of musical analysis, targeting harmonic thinking, thematic conception, rhythmic-melodic elements, orchestration and organisation of musical forms. Although it is an old publication, influenced by the political context of the middle of the 20th century, the volume focused on the life and work of N. Myaskovsky remains an authentic testimony of the spirit of the time, illustrating a historical and artistic fraction through the work of a respected figure and valuable composer for the Russian culture of the first half of the last century.

3. Considerations on the relationship between the music of N. Myaskovsky and the political context of the first half of the 20th century

In this section of the study, we aimed to debate the reception of N. Myaskovsky's personality and work from the perspective of recent researches, published in specialised volumes and collections in the last two decades. We refer to the studies signed by Marina Frolova Walker, Patrick Zuk and the book chapter written by Pauline Fairclough, all mentioned above and published after 2000.

The basic idea that must be emphasised in the case of these researches concerns the way of approaching the political problems and the relationship of the composers with the management system from the perspective of the contemporary musicologists, who focused their attention on the change of perception and expression in relation to the situation of the Russian musical culture during the communist period. The natural phenomenon of historical distancing from that stage determined the present researchers to observe the connection between the works accomplished between the years 1930-1950, the composing styles and the political ideology from the perspective of objectivising and decanting the previous opinions, often characterized by the exaggerated highlighting of the tragic, the search for romanticised dramas in insufficiently justified contexts, the disregard of some composers according to the criterion of acquiring specific features for the communist ideology in their music. As Marina Frolova Walker also observed, "today, the period is usually viewed through a Fall narrative and individual composers are regarded as hypocritical opportunists or tragic victims" (Frolova-Walker, 2003, p. 200). This tendentious practice has led to the derogatory labelling of composers such as Nikolai Myaskovsky, Dmitry Kabalevsky, Visarion Shebalin, Aram Khachaturian as followers of the socialist realist style but many scientific papers and book chapters from the last two decades prove the importance of neutral integration of this period in the natural course of music history and the intermediate position adopted by these composers, who were aware of their stylistic options and avoided severe compromises by seeking neutral solutions.

Socialist realism, however superficial, uniform and without artistic value used to be considered, appeared as a necessity in the musical field to integrate composers into a radical political regime through minor compromises, initially based on works composed without ideological content and taken as examples to be followed by other colleagues. This was the case with the two works completed in 1931 (ballet *Flames of Paris* by Boris Asafyev and *Symphony No. 12* by Nikolai Myaskovsky), that became subject to the "expertise" of ideological compatibility and were accepted by the commission of investigation as a starting point in the process of creating a new musical style, corresponding to the socialist realism in the other arts. The aspect that generated a generalised rumour among the members of the *Association of Contemporary Music* was the

lack of a clear program, of a manifesto that would specify the concrete ways of applying the proletarian vision in the musical field. On the one hand, the situation was convenient for those who wanted to discredit and eliminate from the space of public notoriety the artists considered “formalists”, “decadent”, predisposed to embrace modernism, and on the other hand, the lack of concrete requirements determined the stylistic uniformisation, the repression of compositional originality, the loss of freedom to explore new techniques, the control over the musical content and form, generating an “art of boredom” (Frolova-Walker, 2004, p. 101).

In connection with this aspect, the researcher Marina Frolova-Walker explicitly formulates in one of her studies the aesthetic significance acquired by the binomial of the terms content-form within socialist realism: the content referred to the subject or title of the work, which had to be progressive, with obvious reference to the life of ordinary people and communist ideals, while the form regarded the style of music employed, which had to be as simple as possible, accessible, with sonorities inspired by the musical tradition of the 19th century and Russian folklore, without connection to the ideas of the “declining bourgeoisie” (Frolova-Walker, 2003, p. 203). In another study, which metaphorically targets *The Glib, the Bland and the Corny* in the aesthetics of socialist realism, the author states that, after the selection of the works composed in the decade of 1930-1940, it was inferred that “ideally, the form should be transparent, allowing the viewer immediate access to the content”. [...] “While every modernist work is a critique questioning the definition of art itself and its formal aspects, the Socialist Realist aesthetic, consciously created in opposition to modernism, avoids attracting any attention to form.” (Frolova-Walker, 2009, p. 3)

Moreover, Myaskovsky himself was not satisfied with his own symphony, which became a prototype of the new style without intention, a style which he did not consciously generate and to which he had no affinity. As a musician with a solid education and musical knowledge, Myaskovsky knew that *Symphony No. 12* was a compromise, a departure from his own composing standards. Musicologists have discovered in his correspondence with Boris Asafyev harsh self-critical opinions, expressed by the composer himself, who had been concerned with the final form of the symphony for a long period of time. Eventually, he found middle ground in order to avoid triggering a massive, unnecessary scandal, by keeping traditionalist elements, deliberately banal and consciously assumed, without giving any explicit title or programme to his symphony. The party members wanted to associate the work with the process of collectivisation of agriculture, adding the surprising, non-artistic title, infused by the reforming social vision of communism – *The Collective Farm*. Despite the ideological connotations, *Symphony No. 12* by N. Myaskovsky had a positive impact on the quality level of music composed at

that time, establishing criteria of artistic value that were higher than many mediocre works, composed without the consciousness of artistic finality.

Similar observations about the impact of socialist realism on Russian musical culture we found in the more recent studies of the musicologist Patrick Zuk, published between 2012-2014. His research concerns Nikolai Myaskovsky's position in the context of the tense political events of 1948 and the reassessment of Soviet culture from the perspective of "regimenting" the musical composition. The difficulty of discovering an objective historical truth is generally valid in the case of Russian composers who activated in the two world wars and in the post-war decades, because of the idealisations and mystifications found in the biographies written in the '60s-'70s but also in the case of subsequent publications, when one can notice a slide to the other extreme, through a certain need to compensate the artists, who were disregarded by the coercive political regime, causing an exaggeration of the destructive impact. Of course, no researcher wants to minimise the suffering and humiliation endured by certain composers on the part of some colleagues, who have speculated on the shortcomings of the system so as to denounce renowned musicians such as I. Stravinsky, S. Prokofiev, D. Shostakovich. But the reverse of this phenomenon has led to the cataloguing of other composers as untalented artists, lacking creative individuality or weak in front of political pressures.

N. Myaskovsky is a particular case in this complicated context, because he fought an intense inner struggle to find a neutral sonorous language, without completely abandoning his previous style and without becoming an apologist of communist ideals. Nevertheless, in certain articles, studies, books, Myaskovsky is mentioned in collective statements, among other composers who capitulated to political oppressions. Patrick Zuk seeks to rehabilitate his name and to adopt an objective tone in dealing with this issue, stating that "one of the main difficulties is to attain a perspective that allows for complexity of response and a wide measure of variation, even over the course of an individual career: it is surely unjustified to assume that all composers reacted in a similar way to their circumstances" (Zuk, 2014, p. 359). Analysing the bibliography that led to a musical portrait insufficiently argued in the biographies published in the decades immediately following the series of accusations of 1948 (Tamara Livanova – 1953, Boris Schwarz – 1972), Patrick Zuk systematically dismantles the negative aspects of Myaskovsky's musical work and stylistic path, considering each problem inside the context where the composer made certain concessions in his own symphonies or publicly made certain statements in connection with the lack of importance of his activity before 1930 or when he took a humble position on the inability to find the right means to express communist ideals through music. Patrick Zuk adopts a balanced, less harsh attitude compared to other contemporary researchers concerned with the history of Russian music, emphasising the need to detach contemporary historians from

terms previously associated with Russian music and largely spread in the musicology of the 20th century – *Russianness* and *Sovietness*. These concepts referred to the national, authentic character, specific to the Russian culture of the 19th and 20th centuries (Zuk, 2014, p. 387).

4. The presence of N. Myaskovsky's music in concert programmes of recent decades and in musical reviews and chronicles

On the occasion of the 140th anniversary of the Russian composer's birth, in the city of Yekaterinburg there took place the festival *Myaskovsky Dialogues*, lasting over three days, including representative works from most musical genres that he approached: symphony, cantata, quartet, sonata, pianistic miniatures, romances for voice and piano. One of the interesting ideas of the festival was the insertion of a theatrical moment, imagined as a dialogue between two actors, who had speeches based on the exchange of letters between N. Myaskovsky and S. Prokofiev, as a result of their sincere friendship and collegiality. Despite the ten-year difference between the two musicians, the researchers extracted from their letters many ideas and opinions expressed to each other about certain works, expressed in a constructive way, sometimes through jokes or self-critical reactions. Furthermore, Myaskovsky avoided expressing himself publicly about Prokofiev and wrote about the political situations in which they were involved in the correspondence maintained with the musicologist Boris Asafyev (Frolova-Walker, 2003, pp. 205, 207, 211, 215). During the festival, Myaskovsky's music was well received by the contemporary audience, as evidenced by the chronicle signed by Mark Pullinger (2021, web source), having a positive impact through the balanced choice of repertoire from each representative genre and the idea of integrating visual and theatrical arts, through the aforementioned play and the inclusion of documentary films about the life and activity of the Russian composer.

Following the interest in Myaskovsky's music in reverse order from a chronological point of view, it is important to mention the symphonic concerts performed by renowned orchestras of the European Philharmonics after 2000, under the baton of famous conductors, such as Neeme Järvi, Valery Gergiev, Vasily Petrenko, Valery Polyansky, Vladimir Jurowski. The activity of these conductors had a considerable impact on the discovery and comprehension of a less known segment in the history of Russian music, with a dense, provocative content and many contradictions.

The chronicles and reviews existing in international databases indicate a low interest in Myaskovsky's music before 1989 and an increasing concern for the rediscovery of his works after this historical threshold, but especially after the year 2000. Articles by Mark Pullinger (*Bachtrack*, March 2021), Tom Service (*The Guardian*, February 2014), Guy Rickards (*Tempo*, October 2010), David Gutman (*Gramophone*, October 2008), Roger Sutherland (*Tempo*,

October 2003), Calum MacDonald (*Tempo*, April 2002), David Nice (*Tempo*, October 2002) prove enthusiastic reception of the symphonies composed by N. Myaskovsky, due to the openness of listeners to lesser-known music and to a deeper understanding of works previously classified as “formalist”, “realist-socialist” or considered compromises devoid of artistic value.

Guy Rickards, author of the chronicle about *Symphony No. 6*, performed by the *London Philharmonic Orchestra* at the *Royal Festival Hall* in 2010, states at the end of his article that listening to the work had the impact of a premiere, hoping that conductor V. Jurowski would schedule other symphonies of the Russian composer in his concerts. “A full cycle might be too much to hope for, but this work, and the enthusiastic reception it was rewarded with, shows that there is a definite market for Myaskovsky in Britain.” (Rickards, 2010, p. 54)

The articles signed by David Gutman (2008) and Calum MacDonald (2002) are two reviews of the discs coordinated by conductor Evgeny Svetlanov between 1991 and 1993, together with the *Russian Federation Academic Symphony Orchestra*. This collection (still available today) includes 16 CDs with the integral of symphonies and orchestral works composed by N. Myaskovsky, indicating interest in his music and the possibility of promoting his creation only after the fall of communism in 1989. The project of E. Svetlanov brings to the attention of musicians and general public the case of the valuable composer, with a major impact on the history of Russian music and the evolution of the symphony genre in the 20th century, demonstrating that “it is no 'Soviet Artist's reply to just [or even anticipated] criticism, but a demonstration of how to write still-decent music while keeping one's head down” (MacDonald, 2002, p. 48).

Another idea that is worth remembering after reading other concert chronicles concerns the totality of the symphonies composed by N. Myaskovsky, whose impressive number is not a distinctive achievement in itself, because the 27 symphonies are not uniform at the stylistic level, do not have the same type of semantic content and are not similar in sonorous language, dramaturgical construction or artistic message. Roger Sutherland points out that “Myaskovsky’s symphonic writing possesses extraordinary lyrical beauty and is as compellingly argued as it is passionate in expression” (Sutherland, 2003, p. 58).

The oldest articles discovered in digitised publications date back to the post-war period, from which we mention two concert chronicles signed by the British critic Geoffrey Norris and published in *The Musical Times* periodical journal between 1974-1975. We have the opportunity to observe the perception of a musicologist from Western Europe during the Cold War, a period when the contact between the musical cultures of the east and west of the continent was greatly limited by the existence of the Iron Curtain. From this reason, the possibility of hearing musical works such as *Symphonies No. 22* and *No. 23* by

N. Myaskovsky, along with other works composed by R. Shchedrin or E. Svetlanov was a rare event, strongly influenced by the political context. Opinions about Myaskovsky's activity at that time reflected some reluctance to works that had previously acquired negative associations with communist ideology and the socialist realist style.

5. Conclusions – The value of N. Myaskovsky's works for the audience of his time and the listeners of the present

The case of N. Myaskovsky, although it concerns the life and work of a composer considered traditionalist, anachronic and a proselyte of the socialist realism initiated during the 1930s, is a subject still present in the musicology of the early 21st century, because Myaskovsky's music does not remain unnoticed: his symphony is massive, robust, having a particular force to capture the attention of the public, through the well-defined themes, the evolution of ideas, the flow of discourse, the balanced harmonic language with innovative tendencies and traditional elements, culminative dramaturgy and tensional gradation on large units of discourse, in late Romantic and postromantic style. Even though he is not one of the leading composers of the 20th century by the originality of his musical language, Myaskovsky remains in the history of music as a representative figure of a generation of musicians considered as resistance pillars of Russian musical culture, which has undergone a constant transformation and adaptation to historical conditions. He composed in most of the traditional classical-Romantic genres, which he deeply explored by adapting the specific features of Russian music to the Western norms of musical form and language, offering valuable works to posterity, accomplished with craftsmanship, rigour and musical science.

Regarding his official status in the context of the communist regime, the passing of time and the historical perspective are essential elements to generate a neutral perception, detached from the emotional fervour and some critics' tendency to create trenchant stylistic delimitations. Myaskovsky was not entirely a Soviet composer, because he had already been old when the new principles of socialist-realist aesthetics were outlined. He already had a composing experience prior to the new historical stage, as his compositional activity before 1930 highlights a solid, stylistically stable foundation of traditionalist orientation, showing respect and admiration for both Russian predecessors and Western European musical tradition.

It is worth remembering the idea expressed by one of his contemporaries, the musicologist (and, subsequently, the composer of socialist-realist orientation) Boris Asafyev, who considered Myaskovsky a connecting path between “the living past of Russian music, through the stormily pulsating present to the prophetic gift of the future”. The reluctance and austere expression of his music demand “a reciprocal concentration and a tendency

towards a philosophical disposition, but these traits promise for Myaskovsky's music a muted but enduring glory” (Rayskin, 2001, *Oxford Music Online*).

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