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Correspondence of Literary Text and Musical Phraseology in Shostakovich's Opera *The Nose* and Gogol's Fantastic Tale

ALEXANDER N. TUMANOV

The adaptation of literary texts to music, especially when it takes place between such genres as drama and opera, poem and art song and often prose and opera, offers ample material for comparative studies on literature and music. The present study will examine problems related to the adaptation of the literary text to music in Dmitrii Shostakovich's opera *The Nose* (*Nos*). We will attempt to find out what, if any, influences of the literary and other artistic trends of the time had been exerted on the opera's conception and realization. This will involve the comparative analysis of (1) literary-linguistic and musical phraseology; (2) the literary source text as it corresponds to the musical text in terms of its textual implications; and (3) the correlations of aesthetic values in the source text and in its musical adaptation that reflect the artistic historical process.

The case selected is the beginning of Act I of Shostakovich's opera *Nos* and the corresponding section of Nikolai Gogol's story of the same name. Such an analysis requires the examination of the complex circumstances which surround the making of an opera, that is, the literary, musical and aesthetic climate of the times as well as the personality of the composer himself.

Shostakovich's opera *Nos*, written in 1928, was first staged in January 1930 in the Leningrad Maly Opera Theater. The American musical historian Nicholas Slonimsky describes the circumstances accompanying the first performance:

The opera was cautiously billed as an "experimental performance." The Artistic Council of the Maly Theater found it necessary to give an explanation. Admitting that "some of the proletarian audience might be bewildered by the complexity and modernism of the musical medium employed by Shostakovich," the Council announced its conviction that the aim of Soviet art is the creation of new forms and that Soviet opera should break with the traditions of its bourgeois predecessors.¹

¹ Nicholas Slonimsky, "Shostakovich," in *The New Book of Modern Composers*, ed. David Ewen, 3d ed. (New York, 1964), 371.

Nos was “the last of the Soviet operas of the constructivist period,” writes Slonimsky, and, it should be added, the last opera of that vein not subject to condemnation.² Shostakovich’s next major opera, *Lady Macbeth of the Mtsensk District*, written in a manner which continued the tradition of *Nos*, became the object of fierce “criticism from above.” *Pravda* featured articles which campaigned for the purification of Soviet music in order to “rid it of formalism.” Subsequently Shostakovich “acknowledged his errors,” first in 1936 and later in 1945 and 1948. Despite his usually immediate and possibly sincere agreement with the criticism of his “formalistic tendencies,” in his better compositions Shostakovich remained faithful to the artistic principles of his earlier works, which are distinguished by features of modernism.

At the same time it is impossible not to hear in his music the links with the composers of the Russian national school of the nineteenth century. Both tendencies, modernism and adherence to the principles of the Russian national tradition, were typical of Shostakovich’s creative world. “The conflict between cosmopolitan modernism and folkloristic nationalism in Soviet music,” Slonimsky noted, “is dramatically illustrated by the creative evolution of Dmitri Shostakovich.”³ Shostakovich himself often wrote of nineteenth-century Russian classicists as the source of his inspiration. The works of Mussorgsky in particular were of great importance to Shostakovich.⁴ However, the several sources of the composer’s creativity did not come into conflict with each other; rather, they were fused in Shostakovich’s works of various genres, and in particular in his opera *Nos*.

The importance of the tradition established by Mussorgsky is indicated by the fact that Shostakovich continued to work on Mussorgsky’s manuscripts throughout his entire life—the orchestration of *Boris Godunov*, *The Khovansky Affair* and, later, the orchestration of *Songs and Dances of Death* and *A Song about a Flea*. The spiritual and stylistic proximity of Shostakovich’s compositions to those of Mussorgsky’s, especially in symphonic and operatic genres, bears witness to this inspiration. It is not by chance that Slonimsky refers to *Nos* as “the first opera” in which “the music [is written] in an extremely subtle neo-Mussorgskian idiom.”⁵ As in his later symphonies, where soloists and a choir were included (very much in the style of the dramatic scenes in *Boris Godunov* and *Khovanshchina*), Shostakovich turned in his operas to the same source that had inspired Mussorgsky. In a number of cases Gogol’s satire provided this source; for example, Mussorgsky’s Gogolian operas *Marriage* and *Sorochinsky Fair* on one hand, and Shostakovich’s *Nos* on the other. Shostakovich’s bond with Mussorgsky, moreover, was deeply rooted in the Russian national school of music of the nineteenth century. Shostakovich took up the legacy of Aleksandr Dargomyzhsky, a pioneer in the Russian Theater of Music Drama, and Mussorgsky, creator of the greatest epics of the Music Drama, and expressed their principles through twentieth-century music.

² N. Slonimsky, “Introduction. Modern Music: Its Styles, Its Techniques,” *ibid.*, 38.

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ His frequent references to Mussorgsky can be found in the composer’s numerous speeches and articles. See Laurel E. Fay, “Mussorgsky and Shostakovich,” in *Mussorgsky in Memoriam: 1881–1981*, ed. H. Brown (Ann Arbor: UMI Research Press, 1982), 215–26.

⁵ N. Slonimsky, *Music since 1900*, 2d ed. (New York, 1938), 321.

Shostakovich entered the Leningrad Conservatory in 1919 and completed his studies in 1925. These were years of literary and musical manifestos; years of the emergence, struggle for survival, and disappearance of creative trends and groups; and years of hope and quests. Certainly Shostakovich could not have avoided being influenced by his environment: the Ideological Platform of the Russian Association of Proletarian Musicians (RAPM); literary groups from the futurists to the “nichevoki”; new trends in the area of theater; and the truly scholarly books by the literary founders of the Russian Formalist School.⁶ The latter merits particular mention since Russian Formalism began to take shape as a school in 1916, and by 1919, when the young Shostakovich entered the conservatory, it was already a serious, established force in the literary and aesthetic life of Russia.

The composer’s familiarity with the Formalist School was bound to play an extremely important role in the artistic conception and realization of an opera based on a work by Gogol; after all, while working on the libretto, Shostakovich was undeniably interested in literature about Gogol, and Gogol was a favorite theme among many of the members of the Formalist School.

In particular, Shostakovich was unable to disregard the works of Viktor Vinogradov and Boris Eichenbaum dedicated to Gogol.⁷ It is even possible that the actual conception of the opera was a consequence of reading their articles. Vinogradov, who represented the “younger generation” in the OPOIAZ, and Eichenbaum, whose approach was more scholarly than the rebellious position of the early Formalists, were probably closer to Shostakovich with regard to the scope of their ideas than to Shklovsky and the others.⁸ Vinogradov’s and Eichenbaum’s attitudes toward literary analysis were more “complex” and conformed less to the dogmatic analysis of form alone. They made use of the intricacies of psychological, literary and often social factors in the analysis of artistic texts. These principles of scholarly research must have attracted the young composer since they, more than anything else, corresponded to his aesthetic and ideological aspirations. On one hand, Shostakovich at once declared himself a modernist (Symphony No. 1, 1925) with his ensuing interest in contemporary aesthetic theories. On the other hand, ideologically the composer perceived himself in the spirit of a communist worldview (it is no coincidence that his Symphony No. 2, 1927, was dedicated to the Tenth anniversary of the October Revolution). Consequently, the social and “class character” of art formed a major part of his aesthetic credo. Hence Shostakovich’s other inner world linked him with populism, the “Mighty Five” (*Moguchaiia kuchka*), and specifically with Mussorgsky. Of importance is the fact that Shostakovich realized that he was continuing the concept of sympathy with the people and with their social problems.

⁶ The term “Russian Formalism” as a definition of a school of literary criticism has nothing in common with the official Soviet stamp “formalism in music and art,” which was intended for the denunciation of any manifestation of modernism or avant-gardism undesirable for Soviet ideology.

⁷ Viktor Vinogradov, “Naturalisticheskii grotesk: Siuzhet i kompozitsiia povesti *Nos*,” in *Evoliutsiia russkogo naturalizma* (1929; facsimile Ann Arbor, 1967); Boris Eikhenbaum, “Kak sdelana *Shinel’* Gogolia,” in *O proze* (Leningrad, 1969).

⁸ OPOIAZ [Obshchestvo izucheniia poeticheskogo iazyka, or the Society for the Study of Poetic Language], along with the Society for the Study of Artistic Language, was a forum where the members of the Russian Formalist Movement read their papers and held discussions in the 1920s.

If he so desired, Shostakovich could find in the works of the younger generation of the Formalist School both an answer to his modernistic aspirations and (at times) a historically and psychologically, if not socially, grounded analysis of the phenomenon of art. In the works of V. Vinogradov, for example, one can detect not only a Formalist method of analysis but also, to a degree, some elements of the historical method. Vinogradov did not reject the psychological factor as some earlier formalists had done.

Gogol's subject matter was a natural choice for Shostakovich, who was strongly attracted by modernistic devices, whose talent gravitated toward satire and the burlesque and, as has already been emphasized, whose ties with the nineteenth century's musical legacy led him to Mussorgsky. Gogol's satire, while providing ample opportunity for new musical idioms, could have been used at the same time for a social interpretation of the past in the Russian classical tradition. "In *Nos*," wrote Shostakovich in 1928,

Gogol, while making use of the strange incident regarding the loss by collegiate assessor Kovalev of his nose, creates a remarkable satire on the era of Nicholas I. He portrays the weak and vulgar Kovalev . . . a dullard clerk from a newspaper office, a noncommissioned patrolman—*kvartal'nyi*, who is obsessed with administrative enthusiasm, a bribe-taking drunken barber Ivan Iakovlevich and his shrewish wife Praskovia Osipovna, and many other characters, typical in their pettiness, who are seen against the overall background of a bureaucratic, police era.⁹

Behind all this Soviet phraseology stands a genuine concern with the historical trustworthiness of the contents of the opera. This combination of the historic-realistic approach with the principles of the Formalist School (along with some other modernistic influences of the 1920s) can be traced in various layers of the opera's verbal text.

TEXTUAL CHANGES OF GOGOL'S TEXT IN THE OPERA

Shostakovich wrote the libretto for Acts I and II of *Nos* himself, with a little help from the prominent Russian writer Evgenii Zamiatin, who wrote the scene of Kovalev's awakening (Act I, Scene Three, 5: Kovalev's Bedroom). Later two young writers, G. Ionin and A. Preiss, took part in the work on the text of Act III. There was not enough material in Gogol's story for an opera, so in the libretto we find a great number of borrowings from Gogol's other works (and even from Dostoevsky—two songs by the servant Ivan from *The Brothers Karamazov*). In regard to the actual text of *Nos*, Shostakovich's opera is a model of an extraordinarily sensitive adaptation that follows both the spirit and the letter of the original.

Work on *Nos* was a true piece of textual research: changes to Gogol's text were made taking into account recognized versions of the story and even including versions of incomplete manuscripts. Of course, this does not mean that all the changes that were introduced into the libretto had come from earlier versions of Gogol's tale.

⁹ D. Shostakovich, "K prem'ere *Nosa*," *Rabochii i teatr*, no. 24 (1929): 12 (cited in *Shostakovich, The Nose*, editor's note).

There was a number of changes that were dictated by considerations of a musical and dramatic nature, for example, where possible the narrative is changed to direct speech. In many cases Shostakovich's aspiration toward realistic language accounts for differences between the text of the opera and the text of the narrative: the composer wanted to remove the "bookishness" from the speech of Gogol's characters, who were taken out of their original milieu and placed on the theater stage.

The opera *Nos* shows striking stylistic integrity, which is particularly unusual given the age of its author, who was by that time only twenty-two. Undoubtedly, behind this stylistic unity, behind the selection of the text's versions, and behind the united musical and dramatic decisions, there was a definite method of approach to Gogol's tale: a conception of the artistic realization of the opera. Was this conception worked out by Shostakovich himself, or was it influenced by scholarly studies on Gogol, which were well known to the composer, and by his story "Nos" in particular?

In 1919, Eichenbaum published in Petrograd "How Gogol's *Overcoat* Is Made" in the collection *Poetica*. The article appeared again in 1924 in the collection *Through Literature*, published in Leningrad. This article acquired widespread fame in artistic circles and was accessible to all who were interested in Gogol. During his work on the opera (or earlier), Shostakovich could have drawn from the article the idea of Gogol's narrative manner, which Eichenbaum named "skaz." The term soon became a key word in the stylistics of a number of Russian Formalists. Eichenbaum saw "skaz" as a major feature of composition. It is important to distinguish "two types of comic *skaz*: (1) the narrative *skaz*; and (2) the reproductive *skaz*. The first is limited to jokes, semantic puns, etc., and the second introduces the device of verbal mimicry and gesture, inventing special comic articulations, oral puns, capricious syntactic arrangements, etc."¹⁰

This idea could have been, and apparently was, extremely important both for the vocal and for the orchestral realization of the opera. Judging by the music, Shostakovich availed himself of the notion of "skaz" in working out the musical and dramatic conception of *Nos*. The dialogues in the opera¹¹ alternate with orchestral episodes,¹² which conform to Eichenbaum's description of the compositional role of the "skaz" with great accuracy. Shostakovich's opera develops as a "reproductive *skaz*" both in the form of a lively dialogue worked out to the smallest detail, and in a form that is purely musical, transmitting events by seemingly nontheatrical means and constituting *orchestral*, or *symphonic* "skaz." Thus, in the music of the symphonic episodes we "see" Ivan Iakovlevich's fear as he tries to get rid of the nose on the embankment, and we "see" Kovalev's mad race through the streets of St. Petersburg in search of his nose. This symphonic "skaz" revealed in Shostakovich the composer who in the future would write so prolifically for the cinema. Those who consider the symphonic "skaz" of *Nos* simply program music should refer to the score of the op-

¹⁰ Eikhenbaum, "Kak sdelana *Shinel'* Gogolia," 306-7.

¹¹ The dialogues in Act I are typical of the "skaz" representation; for example, Ivan Iakovlevich—Praskovia Osipovna; Ivan Iakovlevich—the police inspector; Kovalev—the servant; Kovalev—the Nose in Kazan Cathedral.

¹² The principle of the reproductive "skaz" is evident in such symphonic episodes as "Ivan Iakovlevich on the Riverbank" and "Kovalev Goes in Search of His Nose."

era: the orchestral episodes are not objective descriptions of events or the retelling of scenes by an artist (as in Mussorgsky's *Pictures at an Exhibition*) but the satirical embodiment of dramatic events in music where the voice of the author is clearly heard.

The symphonic "skaz" in *Nos* is an important element of its dramatic development, where, as the composer wrote,

the elements of action and music are equal. Neither one nor the other occupies a predominant place. It is in this manner that I attempted to create a synthesis of music and theatrical presentation. The music was not written by numbers [Shostakovich refers to the fact that he abandoned the practice of dividing the opera by "numbers" attributed to arias and recitatives—A.T.], but in the form of an *uninterrupted symphonic current*, although without the *Leitmotifs*. The interruptions take place only between the acts. Every act appears as part of a united music-theatrical symphony.¹³

In his account of his graduate work Shostakovich gave another interesting definition of his principles as to the creation of the opera: "I have symphonized Gogol's text not in the form of an 'absolute,' 'pure' symphony, but proceeding from a theatrical symphony, which is represented by Vs. Meyerhold's production of *The Inspector General*."¹⁴ This extremely interesting acknowledgment by the young composer is corroborated by yet another statement made considerably later:

I lived at Vsevolod Emilievich [Meyerhold's] place on Novinskii Boulevard. In the evenings we often talked of the fact that one should create a musical play. At that time I was working hard composing the opera *Nos*. . . . Undoubtedly he exerted a creative influence on me. I somehow even began to write the music in a different way. I wanted in some way to bear resemblance to Meyerhold.¹⁵

Meyerhold's passion for symbolism ended with the death in 1910 of the Russian actress Kommissarzhevskaja.¹⁶ In the 1920s the formalists, side by side with the constructivists and futurists, exerted great influence on Meyerhold. His new productions in all of his later periods had one trait in common: modernism. The avant-garde tone of his plays (and perhaps, to a special degree, *The Inspector General*) was particularly interesting and close to Shostakovich the modernist. From his contact with Meyerhold, Shostakovich drew the ideas of theatrical convention we find in *Nos*—the vividness and grotesqueness of satire.

At the same time scrupulous work on Gogol's text led Shostakovich along a path of musical theater that was radically different from that of Meyerhold. In his production of *The Inspector General*, Meyerhold advocated full freedom for the director, changing not only the text but also the whole dramatic basis of Gogol's plot. Contrary to this approach, Shostakovich treats both the text of *Nos* and its plot with particular care. "In the libretto I retained Gogol's text unaltered," wrote Shostakovich; indeed,

¹³ Shostakovich, "K prem'ere *Nosa*," 12.

¹⁴ An account of Shostakovich's graduate work, May 1928, Archives of the Leningrad Conservatory.

¹⁵ D. Shostakovich, "V 1928 godu . . .," *Rabochii i teatr*, no. 24 (1929): 53.

¹⁶ M. Slonim, *Russian Theater from the Empire to the Soviets* (New York, 1961), 184–223.

on the whole he used the text of the story almost without change.¹⁷ But the textual changes which we do see in Act I speak very eloquently of the principles of selection. The few small deviations from Gogol's text that we do encounter in Shostakovich's libretto of Act I can be divided into four categories: (1) Changes from the indirect speech of the narrator to the direct speech of the character in the opera; (2) Changes in the speech of characters, which in Gogol's tale is often saturated with bookish expressions typical of the narrator's style, to more vivid, colloquial speech. (The bookish expressions in Gogol's story can be explained by the fact that his narrator plays a central role, and we thus have an *account* of events rather than a demonstration of their unfolding.); (3) Simplifications necessary for a clear perception of the text in a musical phrase, often very complex in its structure; and (4) The restoration of Gogol's original text (which had undergone censorial changes even during Gogol's lifetime).

Leaving aside the changes that are natural and necessary for the transformation of the narrative text into the dramatic libretto, we will examine the three remaining categories of the text's adaptation to the opera. Shostakovich based the replacement of bookish expressions of Gogol's text with colloquial language on the principle of character development. For the simple-minded Ivan Iakovlevich and for Major Kovalev, the most important linguistic characteristic is their colloquial style. This is evident in two examples.

Example 1: Praskovia Osipovna pounces upon Ivan Iakovlevich in anger, demanding that he immediately take the severed nose from the house. In Gogol's story, Ivan Iakovlevich's rejoinder contains a verbal adverb in an unwieldy construction that is typical of the narrator as a pseudoliterary man. Shostakovich changes this construction. This is how Gogol's and Shostakovich's texts look:

Nos (Gogol)
Я положу его, завернувши в тряпку, в угол.¹⁸

I will put it, *having wrapped it in a rag*, in the corner.

Nos (Shostakovich)
Я заверну его в тряпочку и положу в угол.¹⁹

I'll wrap it in a rag and put it in the corner.

More interesting than this change, however, is the fact that Shostakovich did not invent it; rather, he *discovered* it in the early editions of Gogol's works, those from 1842 and 1855.²⁰ This example represents the principle of the extreme and consistent care toward Gogol's text that Shostakovich displayed in his work on the libretto. His careful striving for the preservation of textual authenticity led the composer to the creation of an opera that was modernistic and yet faithful to the classical tradition of Russian musical drama—a typically Shostakovian fusion of aesthetic elements.

Example 2: The third scene of Act I in the opera begins with Kovalev's awakening:

¹⁷ Shostakovich, "К прем'ере *Nosa*," 12.

¹⁸ N. V. Gogol', "Nos," *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii* (Moscow—Leningrad, 1938), 3:50 (hereafter PSS).

¹⁹ D. Shostakovich, "Nos," *Sobranie sochinenii v soroka dvukh tomakh* (Moscow, 1981), 19:11.

²⁰ Gogol', "Varianty," PSS 3:485.

Nos (Gogol)Он хотел взглянуть на прыщик,
который *вчера*шнего вечера
вскочил у него на носу.²¹He wanted to have a look at
the pimple which had broken
out on his nose *the night*
before.*Nos* (Shostakovich)Ковалев выходит из-за ширмы:
Вчерашним вечером вскочил
у меня прыщик на носу²²Kovalev comes out from
behind the screen: *Last*
night a pimple broke out
on my nose.

Instead of the archaically bookish time indication *вчерашнего вечера*—the night before—Shostakovich (or Zamiatin, who wrote this scene) took the more contemporary *вчерашним вечером*—last night—which had come from the 1855 versions of *Nos*.²³ This is an ideal version for a stage production, owing to the colloquial and contemporary nature of the word *вечером* (in the evening; compare *вчера вечером* [last night]). At the same time, the use of the adjectival modifier *вчерашним* (yesterday's; in the instrumental case) imparts a character of colloquialism to the phrase.

Shostakovich sometimes changed Gogol's text to create contrast in emotionally tense dialogues. The musico-dramatic realization of the scene in which Kovelev and the Nose have a conversation in Kazan Cathedral can serve as one illustration of this. Having met his own nose in the guise of a highly placed official, Kovalev, being himself of lower standing, feels inferior and nervously excited. He tries to explain his grievances (to his own nose!) in a loquacious, pompous speech full of complex but meaningless expressions. The reply of the Nose provides an important dramatic contrast that underlines Kovalev's pettiness and triviality. In order to achieve such an effect, Shostakovich makes some alterations in Gogol's text:

Nos (Gogol)*Нос*: Извините меня, я не могу
взять в толк, о чем вы
изволите говорить.²⁴*The Nose*: Excuse me, but I cannot
conceive of what you
deign to speak.*Nos* (Shostakovich)*Нос*: Я не могу понять,
как вы изволите говорить.*The Nose*: I don't understand
how you deign to speak.²⁵

After Kovalev's confused, verbose speech, the Nose's answer in the opera is tranquility itself, which compels the poor major to talk even more confusedly, verbosely and illogically. Shortening and simplifying the Nose's rejoinder, Shostakovich also imparts to it a melodic simplicity, which contrasts with the complexity of Kovalev's subsequent monologue. Thus, the confrontation between Kovalev and the Nose is embodied in the contrast between the laconic and the verbose in the characters' speech and, correspondingly, in the simplicity of the music.

Sometimes seemingly quite insignificant changes to Gogol's text mean a great

²¹ *Ibid.*, 52.²² Shostakovich, "Nos," 52.²³ Gogol', "Varianty," 485.²⁴ Gogol', "Nos," 56.²⁵ D. Shostakovich, "Nos," 41.

deal in terms of musical phraseology. In Shostakovich, the police inspector (*kvar-tal'nyi*) says to Ivan Iakovlevich: «Подойди сюда, любезный!» (Will you please come here, my good man!); in Gogol: «А подойди сюда, любезный!» (And will you please come here, my good man!). It seems that here considerations of musical expressiveness dictated this change. The police inspector, who in the opera sings in a very high counter-tenor voice, literally attacks Ivan Iakovlevich with the high pitch, causing the barber to tremble with fear. Therefore, it is important that the police inspector's first phrase begins on the strong part of the bar and exactly from the word that bears the semantic load. It would have been necessary, following the rhythm of colloquial speech, to place the conjunction “a” (and) on an upbeat in a weak position, thus weakening the inspector's thunderous entry. Compare the two phrases in Figure 1.

Нос 2 $\left| \frac{4}{4} \right.$ — $\begin{array}{c} > \\ \downarrow \\ \text{по} - \text{дой} - \text{ди} \end{array}$ $\begin{array}{c} \downarrow \\ \text{сю} - \text{да}, \end{array}$ $\begin{array}{c} \downarrow \\ \text{лю} - \text{без} - \text{ный!} \end{array}$
 will you please come here, my good man!

Нос 1 $\left| \frac{4}{4} \right.$ $\begin{array}{c} < \\ \downarrow \\ \text{А} \end{array}$ $\begin{array}{c} \downarrow \\ \text{по} - \text{дой} - \text{ди} \end{array}$ $\begin{array}{c} \downarrow \\ \text{сю} - \text{да}, \end{array}$ $\begin{array}{c} \downarrow \\ \text{лю} - \text{без} - \text{ный!} \end{array}$
 And will you please come here, my good man!

Note: > = relatively strong beat

FIG. 1.

Interestingly, the first full version of Gogol's *Nos* reads: «А поди сюда, любезный!» (And will you come here, my good man!)²⁶ According to the number of syllables and the rhythm, it is the same as that which we find in Shostakovich:

Gogol: А по-ди сю-да, лю-без-ный!

Shost.: По-дой-ди сю-да, лю-без-ный!

The stress in this version, however, falls on “and.” As was noted, this “and”—which comes on the weak beat—could not satisfy the composer musically.

We can assume that Shostakovich was familiar with early versions of Gogol's story. If the composer knew the first version, one might suggest that Gogol's internal rhythm prompted Shostakovich toward this musical declamatory realization of the phrase. The category of internal rhythm is extremely important in a prosaic work. When compared with its musical counterpart, internal rhythm can be not only easily recognized and notated but also rationally interpreted in phraseological terms.

The most mysterious textual issue in the first act of the opera is the shift of the episode with the Nose from Gostiny Dvor (marketplace) to Kazan Cathedral. The

²⁶ Vinogradov, “Naturalisticheskii grotesk,” 88.

site of Kovalev's first meeting with the Nose in the guise of a bureaucrat has a long history which started as far back as Gogol's own lifetime. Gogol had suspected that much in his story would be unacceptable to the censors. Therefore, when sending *Nos* to the journal *Moskovskii nabliudatel'* in 1835 he wrote to M. Pogodin, then the editor-in-chief:

If your stupid censorship becomes bothered with the fact that the Nose cannot be in the Kazan Church, then perhaps he can be transferred to a Catholic church. However, I don't think that [the censorship] has already lost its senses to such an extent.²⁷

In fact, the censors went even further. At their insistence the episode in Kazan Cathedral was transferred not to a Catholic church but to Gostiny Dvor. In this form *Nos* was published in *Sovremennik* in 1836 and in all subsequent editions right up to the late 1920s.

Why is the reinstatement of Kazan Cathedral in Shostakovich's opera surprising? The origin of this reinstatement is something of an enigma because the first act of the opera, according to evidence given by the author, was written in the autumn of 1927. It is known that Kazan Cathedral was first reinstated in 1928 in the State Publishers edition under the editorship of Eichenbaum. Thus, one can make two conjectures: (1) Shostakovich (and Zamiatin?) was familiar with the manuscript of *Nos* from the Pogodin Archives in the Salytkov-Shchedrin Public Library; or (2) Shostakovich (or Zamiatin, or both) was acquainted with changes made to the text in Eichenbaum's edition, which was *ready for publication but had not yet been published*.

Both conjectures are extremely interesting. The first would testify to an unusual textual research carried out by so young a composer. The second, *more probable* conjecture, would make it possible to talk of Shostakovich's *personal* ties with the formalists (in this instance, with Eichenbaum) and consequently, of their possible personal and important influence on the artistic conception of the opera. As research on the text and music of the opera shows, however, even without considering these personal ties one can understand that Shostakovich knew well the works on Gogol by contemporary literary critics and that the Formalist School exerted an influence on him.

In Shostakovich's opera, Kazan Cathedral plays an important role in the artistic realization of Kovalev's encounter with the Nose. The dialogue with the Nose takes place against a background of vocal symphonic development which is significant for the dramaturgical composition of the whole scene: solo exclamations and choral interspersions without words impart a striking vividness to Kovalev's conversation with the Nose, creating an atmosphere of preposterous absurdity within which the action takes place. In his graduate report on *Nos*, this is how Shostakovich characterized the scene: "The music in this scene is grandiose and solemn. There is no ethnography

²⁷ Gogol', "Kommentarii," *PSS* 3:652-54.

of church tunes. The music transmits the very character of the cathedral. In the staging, a satirical discord with the music is necessary.”²⁸

As a constructive device, this “discord” corresponds to those characteristics of Gogol’s style that are emphasized by Eichenbaum and Vinogradov. Vinogradov, for example, sees in Gogol’s *Nos* the development of a form that he calls “unnatural grotesque” and upon which the scheme of the component parts is built.²⁹ As if following this suggestion, Shostakovich speaks of a “satirical discord” between the solemn sound of the choir in Kazan Cathedral and the absurd, unnatural and grotesque situation of Kovalev’s conversation with his own nose, which was there “all on its own.” Vinogradov’s “unnatural grotesque” and Eichenbaum’s “logical absurdity” have something in common with Aleksandr Slonimsky’s “comic alogism.”³⁰ All three scholars give much consideration to the joining of the disjunctive as the source of the comic, which is exactly what we find in the Kazan Cathedral scene in the opera.

Another example of the restoration of Gogol’s text by Shostakovich is the Nose’s last rejoinder in the cathedral in the same scene:

In censored publications

Нос: Вы должны служить
по другому ведомству.³¹

You must work in a different de-
partment.

In Shostakovich
(Gogol’s restored text)

Нос: Вы должны служить в
Сенате или по крайней мере в
юстиции. Я же по ученой части.³²

You must work in the Senate, or at
least in the Ministry of Justice. Mine
is a professional field.

Kovalev’s precise work address, his “official affiliation,” sets up a magnificent finish in musical, textual and dramatic expression, after which the Nose disappears. For a short period of time thereafter we hear the musical conclusion of the dialogue in the satirical intonations of the xylophone, to the music of which Kovalev flirts with a “slim blond” until he discovers that the Nose has left the cathedral.

The words “You must work in the Senate” were found only in the complete manuscript of *Nos* (Pogodin Archives). In the *Sovremennik* edition of 1836 and also in the 1842 and 1855 editions this text was changed under censorship. Only in the State Publishers edition of 1928 and in Gogol’s *Complete Works* published in 1938 does this version of the manuscript appear again. It follows that Shostakovich did not make exclusive use of the 1855 edition, and that he was familiar with Gogol’s manuscript, or with material about it.³³

²⁸ “Otchet o rabote aspiranta Leningradskoi gosudarstvennoi konservatorii Dmitriia Shostakovi-cha,” Arkhiv LGOLK (cited in Shostakovich, *Sobranie sochinenii*, vol. 19, editor’s note).

²⁹ Vinogradov, “Naturalisticheskii grotesk,” 88.

³⁰ A. Slonimsky, *Tekhnika komicheskogo u Gogolia* (Providence: Brown University Press, 1969).

³¹ In this form the dialogue appears in all censored editions.

³² Shostakovich, “Nos,” 50–51.

³³ It should be mentioned that in later Soviet editions of Gogol’s works, for example, 1966 and 1969, the publishing house “Khudozhestvennaia literatura” returned to the censored version of “in a different department,” considering, as did the tsarist censors, that the “Senate” and “Ministry of Justice” are not topics for jest.

COMPOSITIONAL DEVICES IN GOGOL AND SHOSTAKOVICH

In the music of the opera, or rather in the compositional devices of its “theatrical symphonic” development, one can recognize some observations made by literary scholars contemporary to the composer. For example, Shostakovich’s model of composition is the same as a model of Gogol’s composition offered by Slonimsky (see Figure 2).³⁴

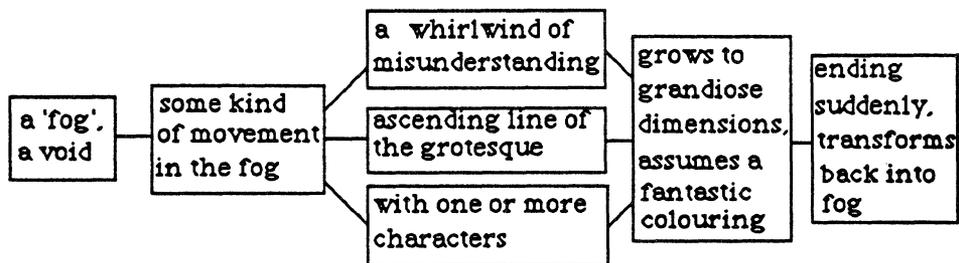


FIG. 2.

Here is the first scene, which begins from out of the “fog”: the awakening of Ivan Iakovlevich—motion in the “fog”—his conversation with Praskovia Osipovna about what is for breakfast, bread or coffee; then the discovery of the nose in the bread, and—a whirlwind of scandal in a grotesque form with two characters. The scene assumes a fantastic hue (with the appearance of the police inspector’s spectre) and later—the fantastic coloring of Ivan Iakovlevich’s rush onto the embankment, where the scene reaches its culmination in the dialogue with the inspector and, ending abruptly, changes back into the “fog.” In Figure 3 we see how Slonimsky’s model corresponds to scenes 2, 3 and 4 of Act I.³⁵

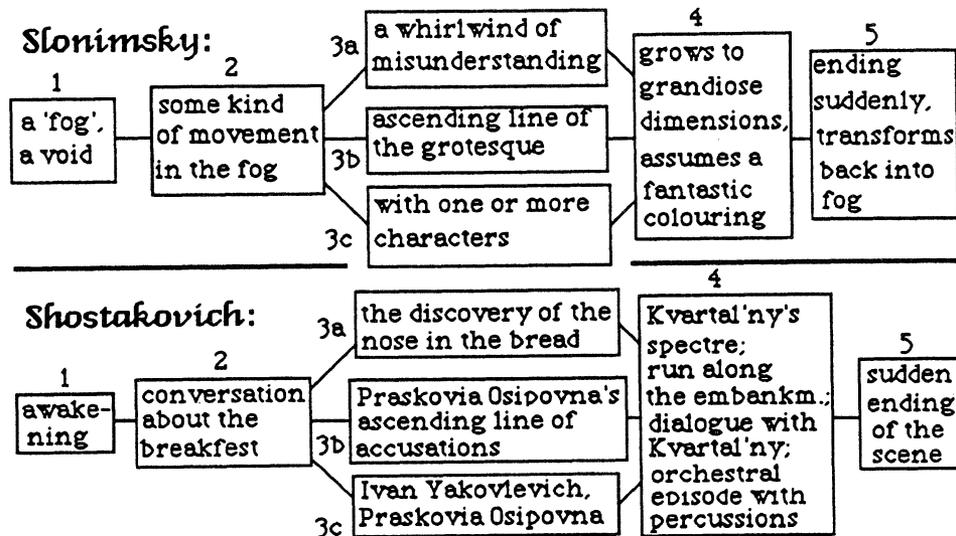


FIG. 3.

³⁴ The model is designed according to Slonimsky’s description in his *Tekhnika komicheskogo*, 62–65.

³⁵ See Shostakovich, “Nos,” 7–25.

In the music of the opera and in the development of the dialogues, this scheme can be traced with mathematical precision. The origin of every episode “from out of the fog” and its disappearance back “into the fog” serves Shostakovich as a device for the uninterrupted theatrical symphonic development of the opera.

There is no doubt that Slonimsky’s model conforms to the principles of composition found in Gogol’s works. Why, then, should this conformity in Shostakovich’s opera surprise anyone? One can find an answer to this question in such features of an uninterrupted “theatric symphony” as *symphonic skaz* and its orchestral episodes. All the orchestral episodes take part in the compositional development and build according to the principles that are outlined in Slonimsky’s model. All orchestral episodes have the composer’s remark *attacca*, which means a nonstop transition from the “action” in the orchestra to the action on stage. Thus, we see here not a mere following of the development of Gogol’s composition but rather a very sophisticated musico-dramaturgical device based on Shostakovich’s interpretation of the principles that, it is reasonable to argue, he adopted from literary criticism.

More evidence of this is found in the prologue to Act I, where the composer takes the conversation between Major Kovalev and Ivan Iakovlevich, who is shaving the major, from the middle of the text to make a separate scene: “Why is it, Ivan Iakovlevich, that your hands always stink?” (In Shostakovich, Kovalev says: “Your hands, Ivan Iakovlevich, always stink.”)³⁶ This dialogue, which is spoken against a background of music, leads the audience into the action of the opera while introducing two of its characters. These characters are linked by the disappearance of the nose and are, so to speak, victims of this disappearance.

After this the action of the first act advances along two parallel lines: the first line—Ivan Iakovlevich, Praskovia Osipovna, the crowd on the embankment, the watchman and the police inspector; and the second line—Kovalev, the Nose, and the crowd of worshippers in the cathedral. These two nonintersecting lines reflect the adventures of the two facets of the nose: the nose as a thing, and the Nose as a person (the Nose personified). Vinogradov points out the “independence” of the two parallel lines on one hand, and their similarity on the other.³⁷ Shostakovich also makes the awakening of Ivan Iakovlevich and Kovalev similar by carefully and in detail tracing out in thematically similar music the puffing and whistling of both characters with a whole symphony of the sounds of awakening (especially in the third scene, when Kovalev awakens). The compositional device of two or more parallel lines of development finds an interesting realization in the imagery system of the opera, to which we now turn.

VOCAL IMAGERY IN THE OPERA

In an article he wrote for the premiere of *Nos*, Shostakovich indicated that “this subject attracted [me] . . . because of its fantastic, absurd content, expounded by Gogol in particularly realistic tones.”³⁸ From the first moments of Act I, Ivan Iakovlevich and Kovalev, the two “realistic” characters introduced in the prologue,

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 6.

³⁷ Vinogradov, “Naturalisticheskii grotesk,” 47.

³⁸ Shostakovich, “K prem’ere *Nosa*,” 12.

enter into a confrontation with forces that they perceive as fantastic and mystical. These forces include not only the nose as a thing and the Nose as a person: Praskovia Osipovna and the police inspector are also “supernatural,” “mystical” powers for Ivan Iakovlevich.

One can divide the characters in Act I into two groups: “realistic” and “mystical.” Such a division is reflected in the musical means whereby the characters are introduced through the phrasing of the text and the musical characteristics. The realistic and the mystical characters are as follows:

Realistic

Ivan Iakovlevich
Kovalev
Kovalev’s servant
the watchman

Mystical

the Nose
the police inspector
Praskovia Osipovna

In the opera, each group finds its musico-declamatory realization in the musical treatment of Gogol’s text and in the aggregate of devices that make up the musico-dramatic impressions. What are these devices?

The commonplace characters such as Ivan Iakovlevich and Kovalev, who sing and talk in a “normal” register, are assigned the voice ranges of bass and baritone, respectively. Praskovia Osipovna, the police inspector, and the Nose are totally different: Ivan Iakovlevich’s menacing wife is a very high soprano and sings at the very highest part of the vocal range almost the whole time—an ideal range for the expression of foul language and scandal. The police inspector and the Nose are, respectively, a counter-tenor and a high tenor, who sing in an unnaturally high register. Such a distribution of voices helps to create in every case a precise vocal image. In the vocal parts Shostakovich deliberately united the musical phrase and the speech phrase:

I tried to present a synthesis of the art of speech and music. . . . Why are all the parts written in such a high register? Let us take the police inspector. This is a police bureaucrat who speaks shouting at the top of his voice. This has already become a habit with him. So I gave him top notes.³⁹

The composer’s naively realistic explanation was an attempt, in all evidence, to repel attacks on the unusual, modernistic sound. Nevertheless, the police inspector’s counter-tenor is a highly significant part of his character.

Ivan Iakovlevich is panic-stricken by two things: his wife and the police. In his consciousness these two forces are as one whole. Opportunely, the first mention of the police in the story of the nose, which is baked into the bread, originates with Praskovia Osipovna (see Figure 4).⁴⁰

³⁹ Verbatim report of the discussion of the opera *Nos* on 14 January 1930, Leningrad State Theater Museum, No. 5365 (cited in Shostakovich, “Nos,” 81).

⁴⁰ Shostakovich, “Nos,” *Sobranie sochinenii* 19:10.

Пр. Ос. *ff*

Где э - то ты, зверь отрезал нос? Мошенник! Пьяни-ца!

Я са - ма на те-бя до-не - су по - ли - ци - и.
Where did you cut off that nose? You beast! Drunkard!
I will report you to the police myself)

Пр. Ос.

По - тас-куш - ка! Не - го-дьяй! Чтобы я ста - ла

за те-бя от-ве-чать по-ли-ци-и? Ах, ты пач-кун!
(Skirt-chasing scum! Scoundrel! Do you expect me to
answer to the police for you? Ah, you dirty mug!)⁴¹

FIG. 4.

In both cases the very word “police” comes in a high register (not to mention some other features of Praskovia Osipovna’s voice registration which will be analyzed later). At the end of the first scene we find the following stage directions: “Darkness sets in. The spectre of the police inspector is seen.” Then: “Daylight again, the spectre is gone.” Against the background of a disquieting tom-tom in the orchestra, Praskovia Osipovna’s last rejoinder can be heard: «Неси куда хочешь, чтобы духу его не слыхала» (Take it wherever you want, so I don’t have to see it again).⁴² The onstage comparison of the police inspector and Praskovia Osipovna reflects the disarray in Ivan Iakovlevich’s soul and his fear of possible punishment. This fear finds its ground and expression both in the piercingly high voices and in the musical characteristics of Ivan Iakovlevich’s enemies. The moment the police inspector’s spectre appears, one can hear the orchestra imitating the sound of the balalaika and the domra (Russian mandolin). The sound of the balalaika appears as a symbol of the police inspector’s home-grown Russianness (квасная русскость) and is used later in Ivan Iakovlevich’s and the police inspector’s real meeting. Thus, in Ivan Iakovlevich’s consciousness, threatening images of his wife and those of the police are

⁴¹ Ibid., 13.⁴² Ibid., 16.

combined. For the listener, the police inspector's appearance sounds sharply satirical. Fear and laughter are fused into one.

By varying voice registers (chest voice, head voice and falsetto), Shostakovich extends the vocal diapason in a modernistic way. This expansion of the vocal diapason allows for enormous possibilities. Thus the police inspector's question, "What were you doing there, standing on the bridge?" literally knocks the already frightened Ivan Iakovlevich off his feet (see Figure 5).⁴³

Квартальный



is based de facto on the principles of parallelism in Gogol formulated by Vinogradov. Whether Shostakovich was acquainted with Vinogradov's work remains unknown. But the very translation of principles of the narrative prose into the language of musical compositional devices, one may argue, could not be accidental.

CORRESPONDENCE BETWEEN THE TEXT AND MUSIC IN THE MUSICAL PHRASE

Two interesting questions arise when one considers the interrelation of the text and music in Shostakovich's musical phrase: (1) How does the author of *Nos* attempt to carry out, and does he in fact carry out, Dargomyzhskii's legacy: "I want the sound to express the words directly"⁴⁵ and (2) In what way is the modernism of the language of the opera revealed in reference to the text?

Shostakovich attached exceptional significance to the text and to its place in *Nos*. He calls his work on the text "a musicalization of words' pronunciation." "The latter principle," the composer wrote, "was placed at the foundation of the construction of vocal parts," and he indicated that "the vocal parts are built on conversational intonations."⁴⁶ This assertion does not always seem to correspond to reality, although in many cases the idea of the "conversationality" of the phrase is clearly expressed in the opera. Somewhat exaggerating the "conversational intonations," Shostakovich even wrote that "while creating the opera . . . I was least of all guided by the consideration that for the most part an opera is a musical work."⁴⁷ In reality, the music of the opera *Nos* is by no means a stepdaughter of the text: it is music of a strikingly dramatic character which contains many stylistic features of the mature Shostakovich. And as if contradicting himself, the young composer wrote in that same article: "In *Nos* the elements of action and music are equal. Neither is allowed to dominate over the other. In that way I strove to attain a synthesis of music and theatrical action."⁴⁸ In this synthesis of music and theater the most important role is that of the speech of the characters: "Here there is special emphasis on the presentation of the text."⁴⁹

In another place, Shostakovich stipulated that "first and foremost, a clear articulation of the words is required from the artists."⁵⁰ Thus, the correspondence between the words and the music was one of the author's principal concerns. In order to understand how this concern is realized we should recall the "two faces" of the young Shostakovich: cosmopolitan modernism on one hand, and the Mussorgskian-Dargomyzhskian folkloric-nationalist realist tradition on the other.

These aesthetic principles, although apparently contradictory, do not conflict in Shostakovich's opera; instead, they become the source of a fruitful collaboration, producing thereby an original interpretation of characters and an imaginative development of action. It is important that these two vastly different principles of the

⁴⁵ See Dargomyzhskii's letter to L. Karmalina, 9 December 1857, in O. Levashova et al., *Istoriia russkoi muzyki*, vol. 1 (Moscow: Muzyka, 1980), 533.

⁴⁶ Shostakovich, "K prem'ere *Nosa*," 12.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ Shostakovich, "Pochemu *Nos*?" *Rabochii i teatr*, no. 3 (1930): 11.

⁵⁰ Shostakovich, "K prem'ere *Nosa*," 12.

musicalization of words' pronunciation—realistic and modernistic—are attached to two different worlds in the opera: the everyday, realistic world and the fantastic world.

In the rejoinders and dialogues of the first group we find, in the majority of cases, *full concurrence between the musical and the spoken phrase*. At the same time, in the intonational structure of the lines of the “fantastic” characters Shostakovich makes use, most of all, of a *modernistic musical language, usually greatly removed from the colloquial*. In this way the composer communicates the absurdity and unreality of the events and creates, using Vinogradov’s term, the effect of the “unnatural” comic “grotesque.” It would be quite interesting to examine how this duality of “words’ musicalization” works throughout the entire opera. But that is a topic for another study.

CONCLUSION

The aesthetic and musico-textual study of Shostakovich’s opera allows one to speak of the serious influence of the school of Russian Formalism on the composer, with respect to his conception of *Nos*, and offers possible explanations for a number of the musical devices used in the opera. On a larger scale we can conclude that, by and large, there is a correlation of the text, composition and music based on the musical-literary ties within the composer’s work.

Beside its purely musical features, Shostakovich’s adaptation of Gogol’s prosaic text works as a sophisticated yet faithful translation of Gogol into the intricate language of modernistic opera, which Shostakovich himself called a musico-theatrical symphony. The opera *Nos* was one of the first operas, if not the very first, of this kind in the history of Russian music theater. It laid down a number of important aesthetic principles for the genre of the modernistic opera in Russia as a whole. Our comparative analysis suggests that the main source of Shostakovich’s opera aesthetics was the aesthetics of the literary criticism of the time, as well as the aesthetics of its primary origin—Gogol’s fantastic tale.